

POETRY PREFERENCES IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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To

FRANKLIN T. BAKER

Good Friend and Good Scholar

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CHAPTER I

Background of the Study

FOR almost fifty years now there has been a general awareness among educators that the hoped-for objectives of the teaching of literature were not being realized. The fact that classroom instruction in traditionally great literature was not resulting in a general raising of the popular level of taste has been only too painfully clear. One by one the classical defenses have given way. An intensive study of a limited number of difficult selections could no longer be defended when the doctrine of mental discipline had fallen into disrepute. With compulsory education bringing into the schools the mass of the population, the always frail defense of literature as a social embellishment had to be abandoned. And last to go, if it is indeed gone, for this seems doubtful, is the theory that the chief function of the course in literature is to keep alive a knowledge of the classics. Though a reasonable defense can be made for the theory that at least one obligation of any system of education is to preserve and interpret the culture of the people, it will not be undertaken here. The ramifications of such an argument run too far afield. Suffice it to say that the emphasis in the teaching of literature has shifted markedly in the last twenty years.

Stating it somewhat broadly, the shift in emphasis might be called the shift from the external to the personal. All three justifications of the teaching of literature were, in a general sense, justifications from without rather than sanctions from within. Literature stood apart. In terms of its austere beauties the individual could be disciplined or made more socially acceptable. Or, if the third defense be examined, the student of literature takes on something of a priestly character. He is the preserver of sacred mysteries, inducted into these by his literature teacher. Today the defense of the teaching of literature is variously stated, but all statements run in a similar direction.

Literature must be considered always in relation to the individual. It must be regarded as a source of pleasure as well as enlightenment; as a means of extending experience and satisfying psychological needs. The reader must always be the point of reference. If a reader finds that a book fails to vivify life, deepen awareness, or interpret significant human experience, then for him that is a poor book regardless of its impressive place on any number of reading lists.

The acceptance on the part of educators of what might be termed the individualized approach to literature and their abandonment of classical standards has forced an entire reorientation of the problem of teaching literature. It has raised new and perplexing questions that are still far from being answered. Obviously it is simpler to prescribe what is "good" for an individual than it is to discover what is at once suited to his needs and culturally desirable. For to turn from the forbiddingly academic to the "popular" in the debased sense of that word would be only to indulge in a fresh educational folly.

The problem of the teaching of literature falls naturally into two main divisions, that of the selection of suitable materials and that of the discovery of desirable techniques for its presentation. While the separation of the two is a rather artificial one, for the two are almost as closely related as form and content in literature, the separation must be attempted here for purposes of discussion. As this study deals only with questions related to the problem of selection of materials, and only one type of material, poetry, and that at only one school level, the junior high school, a narrowing of the discussion is necessary for practical reasons.

That the gulf between the ordinary life activities of young people and life as portrayed in the selections studied in literature classes was too great to be bridged was apparent to the more observant teachers some years before the beginning of this century. By 1902 the problem had been not only formulated but ably stated by Doctor Allan Abbott in a report made by him on a study he had conducted of the reading preferences of high school students. In this report, published in the October number of the *School Review* for that year, he points out the folly of using with young people literary material that is actually distasteful to them when so much material, equally

valuable from a literary standpoint, is available, material that has in it the basic appeals present in the books young people were reading of their own volition. He says, "All new interests are built upon earlier ones. A boy cannot be driven from detective stories to philosophical essays; he must be led step by step."¹ Interestingly enough, I. A. Richards in his *Practical Criticism*, published in 1929, suggests conclusions very similar to those made by Doctor Abbott in 1902. Though Richards' study was concerned with Cambridge students and covered only their reactions to poetry, while Abbott's study was of high school students and surveyed a wide field of reading, both investigators discovered similar sources of difficulty and suggested related solutions. Both found that subtlety, delicacy, and technical perfection were sources of irritation rather than of pleasure to young readers. Both found that poetry constituted only an insignificant portion of their subjects' reading. Both found that the training in daily experience was actually inimical to an appreciation of the subtler types of literature. Richards puts it thus: "Nine-tenths of the ideas and annexed emotional responses passed on by cinema, press, friends, relatives, the clergy, to an average child of this century are—judged by standards of poetry—crude and vague rather than subtle or appropriate."² The suggestion offered by Richards, that any response that works is better than none and that the problem is one of finding the basic level so that the long climb back can be undertaken, is obviously in harmony with Doctor Abbott's point of view. It is, indeed, in harmony with the point of view of thousands of teachers who have been deeply troubled by the difficulties involved in awakening in young people sincere and valid responses to literature.

It was with this newer approach to the appreciation of literature in mind that the present study was undertaken. It was confined to an investigation of poetry preferences, though a study of prose preferences and preferences in activities of related cultural interests were included as minor subsidiary studies because it was felt that these might help to illuminate the problems involved in the main study. This limita-

¹ Allan Abbott, "The Reading Tastes of High School Pupils," *School Review*, 10:586. 1902.

² I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 248. 1929.

tion of the investigation to one type of material was essential, since the study was experimental in nature and the inclusion of other types of material might prolong the experiment unduly. Such inclusion might result, also, in clouding the issue as too many elements would be involved.

The experimental method was used because such a method seemed best suited to the purpose of the study. This purpose, to evolve criteria for the selection of suitable poetry for children of junior high school age, could be achieved only by going to the children themselves for expressions of preference. It was assumed that a diagnosis of poems actually preferred by children would reveal interest elements that would form a basis for the selection of other poetry. In this investigation child judgment was the primary factor, though expert opinion was used both in the classification of materials prior to the experiment and in subsequent analyses of poems that were best liked and least liked.

This reliance on child judgment seemed not only in harmony with a sound philosophy of education but practically desirable. The purpose of the study was not to compile a list of suitable poetry, but rather to get back of simple choices to determine appeals that actually functioned with children. It was a study of the situation as it exists. Only by experiment did it seem possible to discover the basic level, referred to by Richards, from which the slow climb back could be begun. There was no assumption in the study that child taste is either perfect or immutable. It was assumed, however, that a knowledge of such taste represents a fundamental basis for the intelligent selection of material for children.

CHAPTER II

A Summary of Previous Studies

ANYONE who has made even a casual check of the field of studies of children's reading preferences cannot fail to be impressed by the number and variety of the investigations made in the last half century. Obviously teachers have long been aware of the dangers and difficulties involved in the reading problem. The effect of the increasing democratization of education, the shift in emphasis in the classroom from what was "good" for the child to what the child himself found good, plus a dozen other influences, were at work. Every study opens interesting areas for speculation. However, for the purposes of this study, it seems beside the point to go back further than 1900 or to include all the studies that are related in one way or another to the present investigation. In the bibliography are listed references to easily available sources of information in regard to earlier studies. These can be obtained in a convenient check list form, or in a more elaborated form with comparisons of findings and evaluations of procedures and techniques used. In this chapter only the studies that bear a fairly close relationship, in terms of subjects, materials, techniques, or findings, will be listed and briefly discussed. These, it will be noted, cover materials other than poetry. To confine the bibliography to poetry investigations would eliminate much significant material on poetry as in the majority of investigations of reading interests all types of reading were included. Moreover, as the study does deal, though only secondarily, with interests in prose selections, it seems useful to list these more inclusive investigations. These studies are merely cited and briefly outlined so that the general nature of their findings can be compared with the findings of this investigation. For convenience of reference, they are arranged chronologically under three general types: investigation of reading interests either by means of checking

submitted lists of books, by filling out questionnaires, or by checking library withdrawals; investigation of reading preferences by experimental methods; investigation of reading interest or reading comprehension by means of tests.

I. QUESTIONNAIRE OR CHECK-LIST METHOD

1. Investigator—Allan Abbott. Date—1902.

Subjects—2,649 high school students.

Method—Students were asked to evaluate books on reading lists which had been compiled from the two most commonly used in high schools.

Purpose of Study—To discover the reactions of boys and girls to books on reading lists with the idea of compiling less traditional and more suitable lists.

Conclusions—Reading lists in use need revision in order to meet standards of high school boys and girls. This could be done without lowering quality, as worth-while books are numerous. Both boys and girls tend to drop juveniles and series books somewhere after fifteen and before eighteen. High school students like bold relief and strong color. Books ranked low by them are valued by adults for their delicacy or whimsicality. Such qualities do not appeal to youthful readers. Ratings indicate that boys like adventure and girls like sentiment. Books containing both these characteristics represent a common meeting ground for boys and girls.

2. Investigator—Charles McConn. Date—1912.

Subjects—5,803 high school students.

Method—Students were asked to rank all standard classics ordinarily studied in high school.

Purpose of Study—To discover what pieces of literature studied in high school ranked high with students and to draw from such rankings the qualities that appealed to them.

Conclusions—Fiction is the favorite type, since three novels headed the list. All books ranking high contain vivid and dramatic presentations of life. All have fairly strong ethical import. High school students react negatively to literature in which the primary appeal is esthetic or stylistic. They are unaware of subtle beauty or indirect ethical implications.

3. Investigator—J. Carleton Bell. Date—1916.

Subjects—440 high school students.

Method—Students were given forms to fill out. These called for reading done during high school period, either required or voluntary, and

degree of liking or disliking for books listed with reasons for evaluations. Authors and book titles were included on the blank.

Purpose—To discover the reading interests of high school students by getting their evaluation of books listed by them as read either voluntarily or as part of their required reading.

Conclusions—In upper grades interest tends to shift to standard fiction. In literature both boys and girls are interested in plot, character, description, ethical import, fancy, pathos, humor, historical content, realism, style, and gruesomeness. Boys tend to prefer adventure stories while girls tend to prefer fiction that approximates the true novel in form.

4. Investigator—Arthur Jordan. Date—1921.

Subjects—3,598 children in grades six to twelve, inclusive.

Method—Children were asked to list five books they liked and three magazines, using order of preference. Eight libraries, six in New York City and two in a near-by city, were studied to discover interests by checking number of copies circulating, duplicate copies, and number of worn-out copies.

Purpose—To discover what type of reading material interested children.

Conclusions—Boys enjoy books that portray action, courage, loyalty, mastery, and new experience. Girls enjoy books that portray unselfishness, benevolence, affection, and social success.

5. Investigator—Mary Margaret Stroh. Date—1926.

Subjects—216 junior high school teachers.

Method—Questionnaires containing list of literary material most frequently used in the junior high school were sent to representative English teachers with the request that they check them to indicate difficulty, suitability for children, grade placement, and time allotted for study.

Conclusions—Much of the material in the English course of study in the contemporary junior high school is so narrowly traditional that it contains relatively few additions during the last thirty years. There is no agreement as to suitable grade placement or reasonable time allotment for study. The material used suggests too narrow an interpretation of culture.

6. Investigator—Saima Monto. Date—1927.

Subjects—1,275 junior high school, senior high school, and vocational high school pupils.

Method—Students were asked to fill out record blanks for all books read during a semester. They were also required to write a theme giving reasons why they liked or did not like to read.

Purpose—To discover interest in reading, extent of reading, and types of reading done by three types of high school students.

Conclusions—All but 9 per cent of students said that they liked to read. Junior high school students read most and vocational high school students read least. Books ranking highest dealt largely with action or adventure. Boys liked adventure stories and girls liked sentimental fiction.

7. Investigator—B. L. Johnson. Date—1930.

Subjects—1,856 children in grades five to eleven in Duluth, Minnesota.

Method—Questionnaire form used.

Purpose—To discover quantity, quality, and nature of free reading done outside of school and to compare this with free reading done by adults.

Conclusions—Children read more than adults do. Both children and adults read fiction more than any other type of literature. Girls read more than boys. Girls prefer books that deal with home life. Boys prefer adventure stories.

II. EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES OF READING PREFERENCES

1. Investigator—Fannie Dunn. Date—1921.

Subjects—Children in grades one to three in sufficient number to obtain six hundred and one class-pair votes.

Method—Thirty-one paired selections, previously rated by experts for specified qualities, were read to children and their choices recorded.

Purpose—To discover interest elements in primary reading material.

Conclusions—Boys and girls agree fairly well in taste at the primary level. Surprise, story interest, animal characters, liveliness, moral effect, and conversation are important interest factors. Verse form is not of interest to children. A poem, if liked, is valued for other reasons.

2. Investigator—Wilma Garnett. Date—1924.

Subjects—Children in five fourth grades, four in Minneapolis and one in the University of Iowa Elementary School.

Method—Twenty-four stories were read to the children and their choices obtained for best-liked, next best-liked, and least-liked stories.

Purpose—To discover bases for like and dislike in prose selections.

Conclusions—Both boys and girls react negatively to stories that deal with meanness, greed, and cruelty. They also dislike "hard" or "silly" stories. Both boys and girls like action, adventure, humor, faithfulness, happy endings, and fairy tales. Girls like stories that teach kindness, deal with everyday life, and have an ethical import. Boys like stories of animals and stories involving fighting.

3. Investigators—M. B. Huber, H. B. Bruner, and C. M. Curry. Date—1926.
Subjects—50,000 children.
Method—Nation-wide survey conducted by means of experimental forms of poetry books furnished by a publisher to schools participating in the study.
Purpose—To discover children's poetry preferences in classroom situations and to determine proper grade placement of poems used in the experiment.
Conclusions—Poems were improperly placed in currently used courses of study. Best-liked poems were popular within a range of three or more grades.
4. Investigator—Lynette Feasey. Date—1927.
Subjects—550 girls ranging from Standard I to Standard VII, Leeds, England.
Method—Teacher wrote on blackboard names of six poems recently studied and children were asked to say which poems they liked best and, if possible, to give their reasons.
Conclusion—Younger children tended to prefer poems of everyday life and relate poems to themselves. Wide range within stated reasons for liking indicated that some children have no esthetic sense while others have real sensitivity to poetic values.
5. Investigator—Blanche Weekes. Date—1929.
Subjects—412 or 206 pairs of sixth grade children chosen from three large cities and six small communities, choice of subjects dictated by one purpose of study, the investigation of the influence of actual experience on choices.
Method—Tests devised by the experimenter to measure difficulties arising from figurative language or involved sentence structure, were used. Questionnaires were also used.
Purpose—To discover how figurative language and involved sentence structure as factors of meaning affect children's choices of poetry. Also, to discover to what extent actual experience as a factor of meaning affects children's choices of poems.
Conclusions—Though both involved sentence structure and figurative language obscure meaning, figurative language is the more serious difficulty for children. Lack of understanding is important as a negative factor in choice.
Actual experience is a factor in choice, but it may be either favorable or unfavorable. Sometimes a single word in a poem arouses a negative response and so determines choice. Sometimes preference for a poem is based on a false interpretation of it.

6. Investigator—I. A. Richards. Date—1929.

Subjects—100 men and women, undergraduates at Cambridge, ages between nineteen and twenty.

Method—Students were given copies of poems by established poets, ranging in quality from the newspaper verse writer to the already classic poet, and were asked to write critical interpretations of them. As the poems were the less well-known poems of the writers and no names were used on the copies, the students were forced to make independent judgments.

Purpose—To determine how students approached poetry, how well they were able to understand it, and what criteria they applied in evaluating it. The study was a psychological approach to literary criticism.

Conclusions—Even cultivated young people today spend little time on poetry. Students had great difficulty in getting even plain prose sense of a poem. For many the metre and verse form were powerful distractions. Many students failed to get a true response from a poem because a predetermined response stood in their way.

7. Investigator—Helen Mackintosh. Date—1932.

Subjects—Children from third through sixth grade.

Method—Children heard four hundred poems in an eight-week period, ten a period. They were asked to rate these on a five-point scale ranging from very well liked to not liked at all.

Purpose—To discover children's preferences in poems studied and proper grade placement of these.

Conclusions—Poems ranked high had a combination of interest elements. Literary merit is not recognized by children. Children are little interested in the thoughtful, meditative type of poetry. Relation to real experience, for them child experience, and opportunities for vicarious experience are determinants of choice.

8. Investigator—T. W. Sussams. Date—1933.

Subjects—39 boys, ages eleven to twelve, in Birmingham, England.

Method—Boys, given a poem a week over a period, were asked to refresh their memories, and then arrange poems in order of preference. Interviews and written comments were also used.

Purpose—To find boys' preferences in poetry.

Conclusions—21 of the 39 boys based choices on subject matter. The boys were troubled or antagonized by extravagant imagery, introspective mood, or absence of movement. They liked simple poems based on familiar experiences and were influenced by their own personal backgrounds. There was no indication that the boys applied any literary criteria in making choices.

9. Investigator—T. W. Sussams. Date—1936.
Subjects—5,000 boys and girls between ages of eleven and fourteen in schools of Birmingham, England.
Method—Children were asked to rate six common activities in English courses and six kinds of poems.
Conclusions—Both content and activities in English courses run counter to the interests of the children involved. Learning a poem, a very common requirement, was least liked. Reciting a poem and reading a poem came next as least liked. Only girls in bright sections were getting poetry they liked. These girls liked nature poetry, the kind commonly used in the schools. The boys liked sea poems and poems about animals, but the girls did not. The dull girls tended to cling to simple fairy poems below their grade level.

III. TESTS OF PREFERENCE OR OF COMPREHENSION

1. Investigator—Theodore Irion. Date—1925.
Subjects—170 ninth grade students.
Method—Tests, constructed by the investigator, were administered to ninth grade students.
Purpose—To determine difficulties in ninth grade reading material.
Conclusions—Poetry is, of all types of reading, the most difficult. Only children with I. Q.'s of 100 or more can profit by the study of literature now used in the ninth grade.
2. Investigator—Mary Burch. Date—1927.
Subjects—500 junior and senior high school students.
Method—Use of self-constructed tests to measure comprehension difficulties of sixty pieces of literature commonly used in high school.
Purpose—To measure ability and range of ability of students in English classes to comprehend literature included in the course of study.
Conclusions—Range of ability was so great that much of the material used was suitable to only 25 per cent of students in the classes used in the experiment. Great comprehension difficulty probably stands in way of desired carry-over in voluntary reading.
3. Investigator—Lorimer Cavins. Date—1928.
Subjects—Over two thousand school children in West Virginia.
Method—Test, constructed by the investigator, administered to children to measure comprehension difficulties in commonly used poems.
Purpose—To discover proper grade placement for traditional material.
Conclusions—Poems that are commonly used in the elementary school have a grade range average of 3.42. This causes repetition and boredom. Dislike of poetry arises from the fact that it is not understood.

4. Investigator—Ruth Wells. Date—1934.

Subjects—250 high school students.

Method—Use of self-constructed test on humor preferences.

Purpose—To discover preferences in four types of humor, slapstick, absurdity, satire, and whimsy. To discover, also, effect of age, sex, and social background on humor preferences.

Conclusions—Absurdity ranks first and slapstick second through all four years of high school. Taste for satire and whimsy grows with maturity. Taste for the four types tends to level out in the senior year, but absurdity is still a clear first and satire a poor fourth. Girls like satire and whimsy better than boys do and absurdity and slapstick less. Children with superior social backgrounds like satire and whimsy better than do children who are average in the group.

In presenting these summaries, no attempt has been made to estimate critically the studies listed. To do so would involve an elaboration of treatment that is outside the purpose of this investigation. The findings are presented as reported by the authors.

It is interesting to note the many points of agreement among the findings of these investigators. Covering a range in time of thirty-four years and in subjects from the primary to college, they have a surprising unanimity. For convenience, findings common to several investigations are summarized below. Following the subheads are the names of the investigators in whose studies the findings appear. The complete references are given in the bibliography of this study.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Material used in literature courses is unwisely selected and incorrectly placed for the following reasons:

- a. It is selected for literary values that are above pupils' level of appreciation. (McConn, Stroh, Burch)
- b. It is remote from children's life experience and demands an appreciation of the thoughtful, meditative, introspective attitude toward life. (Sussams, Mackintosh, Cavins)
- c. It is too difficult for any but the superior pupil. (Burch, Irion, Sussams)
- d. Its difficulty may not only prevent the reading of similar material as a leisure-time activity but may actually set up a negative reaction to all literature. (Burch)

2. Fiction, the favorite type of literature, is read by young people not because of literary interest but from interests allied to the following:

- a. They are curious about life and wish to extend their experiences even though only vicariously. (Abbott, Jordan)
- b. They want to find their wishes fulfilled imaginatively. (Jordan)
- c. They want a time killer, a defense against boredom. (Jordan)

3. Poetry is the least read and least appreciated of any of the types of literature used in the schools. This is due to the following causes:

- a. Verse form, even for many intelligent and cultivated adults, is a powerful distracter. (Richards)
- b. Poetry implies an approach to life which is contrary to that used in daily experience. (Sussams, Richards)
- c. Poetry is out of harmony with the main intellectual movements of the last century. These imply an analytical, critical, essentially prose approach to experience. (Richards)
- d. Figurative language creates a double difficulty. The slow pupil cannot grasp the figure. The bright pupil, if his aesthetic development has been neglected, may find the figure absurd. (Sussams, Weekes)

4. Young people generally have no aesthetic appreciation. They approach literature with the same critical standards that they would apply to a situation in life. This is indicated by the findings listed below:

- a. The preference of boys for adventure stories and girls for sentimental fiction. Both types suggest a projection of self into a desirable situation rather than interest in form. (Abbott, Garnett, Jordan, McConn, Monto)
- b. The prevalence of either predetermined or erratic responses to poetry, responses based on a false reading of the poem often influenced by the effect of personal experience. (Richards, Sussams, Feasey, Weekes)
- c. The tendency toward passing arbitrary judgments and making choices for preference on supposed moral worth of character portrayed. (Richards, Sussams)

Without anticipating the findings of this study, it seems desirable to suggest at this point similarities between this and the related in-

vestigations that are summarized in this chapter. No study listed used highly comparable techniques or aimed at a closely similar type of investigation. Yet if a mosaic could be made of certain approaches used and of findings listed by previous investigators, it would be seen that this study touches these earlier investigations at several points. Since the experiment here reported was intensive in nature and covered a relatively narrow field both in materials presented and subjects used, while many of the earlier investigations of reading interests covered a broad field, the points of contact are less apparent in the individual summaries than in the general summary which presents these findings in relation to each other.

The work of three investigators, Fannie Dunn, Lynette Feasey, and T. W. Sussams, most closely approaches in purpose the aim of the present study. These investigators sought to get back of simple choices and to determine what interest appeals had determined choices. Of the work of these three investigators, only that of Doctor Dunn is of such a nature as to be classifiable as scientific research. The techniques employed by her, especially the use of trained judges in the classification of material for her experiment and the use of paired selections for children's choices, were fundamental in this study. The work of Lynette Feasey and of T. W. Sussams, while inconclusive from the standpoint of scientific research, points in a direction that is suggestive for such research. Their use of evidence gathered directly from the children themselves in the form of written statements, interviews, and discussions was duplicated in the investigation here reported though the employment of such techniques had been determined on before their work had been encountered.

In content, the work of Helen K. Mackintosh is closest to this study. Its primary concern, children's choices in poetry, is closely allied to the purpose of this investigation. Yet in approach and central intention it is less closely related than is the work of Doctor Dunn or even that of Miss Feasey.

The investigation of humor preferences made by Ruth Wells bears a relationship to the portion of the present investigation that dealt with humor. It, like this study, attempted to get at preferences for contrasted types of humor.

CHAPTER III

Organization of Materials

AS NO single investigation could hope to explore all the problems involved in children's preferences in poetry, certain rather arbitrary limits had to be set for this study. The first of these was to limit the investigation to children in the eighth grade. As the eighth grade occupies the central position in the junior high school organization, it seemed the logical grade to use for purposes of experimentation. The second limitation involved the selection of poems for experimental material.

It is obvious that only a small portion of the material judged suitable for children of this age level could be used in the experiment. As limitation was essential, it seemed desirable to select poetry in such a way that it would fall under certain classifications on the basis of appeal of technique or of subject matter. This grouping would not only further delimit the study but would also allow for comparisons of choices within the groupings as well as within the whole. In certain earlier studies no such grouping had been attempted and difficulties had arisen in an analysis of the findings because comparisons had to be made of poems that were in no sense comparable. While it is clear that the infinitely complex nature of poetry would make it impossible to classify poems perfectly, it seemed desirable, nevertheless, to attempt as exact a grouping as possible.

With this in mind, six main classifications were decided upon. The first two were concerned primarily with technique of poetry and the remaining four with subject matter. These classifications were as follows: imagery, sound effect, nature poetry, didactic poetry, poetry of the commonplace and the romantic, and humorous poetry. As it seemed desirable to get choices not only among the six kinds of appeals suggested by these classifications but among types of poetry classifiable under them, each classification was further split up under

two headings. This use of subdivisions of the six main classifications allowed for comparison of degree as well as of kind. Broadly speaking, these subdivisions followed the principle of contrast throughout. For convenience in reference, the six main classifications are called categories throughout this study and their subdivisions are referred to as the *a* and *b* subdivisions. In every case the *a* subdivision represents the more obvious or more easily comprehended aspect of the main classification. The six categories with definitions of their *a* and *b* subdivisions are listed below.

SIX APPEALS TO BE TESTED

Imagery

- a.* Poems that are simple descriptions or picture poems. These contain no image more difficult than a simple and clearly worded simile.
- b.* Poems that contain fairly involved images, personifications, or an elementary form of symbolism.

Sound Effect

- a.* Poems that have obvious sound effects such as the use of a recurring element, repetition or refrain, onomatopoeia, or very marked rhythm.
- b.* Poems that contain subtle sound effects obtained by means of variation of meter or careful attention to texture. Texture as here used means the relationship between vowels and consonants within a word or between words.

Nature Poetry

- a.* Poems that are descriptive of nature but contain a human or animal center of interest.
- b.* Poems that are descriptive of nature but do not contain a center of interest.

Didactic Poetry

- a.* Poems that imply an ethical lesson through a picture or story of a person or a situation.
- b.* Poems that express an ethical attitude directly.

Poetry of the Commonplace and the Romantic

- a. Poems that deal with everyday life and common experiences.
- b. Poems that deal with traditionally romantic persons or situations.

Humorous Poetry

- a. Poems that present broadly comic situations or are based on absurdity.
- b. Poems that are lightly humorous, whimsical, satirical, or ironical.

A check of the categories selected for study will show that they do not by any means exhaust the possible appeals in poetry suitable for children of the junior high school level. They do, however, represent fairly clearly defined groupings that are consistently present in material suggested as suitable for children of this age.

It will be noted, if the *a* and *b* subdivisions are studied, that in five of the six categories the contrast implied is between degree of difference, while in one category, Poetry of the Commonplace and the Romantic, actual contrast of subject matter is involved. This apparent logical inconsistency could not be avoided without sacrificing important values. It is, moreover, related to an hypothesis underlying the study. This hypothesis, which influenced the arrangement of the categories into contrasted subdivisions and suggested the use of the pairing technique in the experiment in order to get choices between poems immediately compared, will be briefly set down in the paragraph that follows.

Numerous studies have shown that not only the child of junior high school age but the adult who is not above average mentally has difficulty with even relatively simple abstractions. Propaganda, both commercial and political, illustrates on every billboard and in every magazine and paper the fact that material must be clear-cut, vivid, dramatic, and within the individual's experience if it is to influence him. A study of the findings of the long list of studies made of the reading interests of the adolescent all point in the same direction. At the head of the list, invariably, are books that deal with the concrete, the easily grasped. Apparently, if these investigators have discovered even a portion of the truth, the child in junior high school

is intellectually close to the average man, although without his background of experience, either social or emotional. With this in mind, it seemed desirable to use the contrast element in the subdivisions of the categories and to arrange for choices between poems grouped in the contrasting subdivisions. In every case the poems classified under the *b* subdivision, though either selected from material suggested as suitable for children of this age level or highly comparable in difficulty, make a somewhat heavier demand upon the reader. This demand involves the ability to perceive the more subtle effect or to handle simple abstractions. It does not necessarily imply that the poems classified in the *b* subdivision are superior from a literary standpoint, for obviously poetry can be good and at the same time simple.

It is clear that much honest disagreement could arise as to the proper classification of poems into the categories and their subdivisions. At best, these groupings could only approximate actual divisions because of the complex nature of poetry and the subtlety of its total effect. They could not be mutually exclusive. Moreover, certain appeals that would suggest themselves as suitable for study, notably story interest and action, had to be excluded as they were too all-pervading. Conclusions regarding these, it seemed, could more effectively be drawn from a diagnosis of the results. With all these difficulties clearly in mind, a decision was made to select material for dominant central effect, excluding all poems that were in any sense ambiguous according to the accepted definitions.

As the difficulty inherent in any investigation of literary preferences is subjectivity, it was decided to stabilize and objectify the study in every possible way. The first step was, obviously, to check the experimenter's judgment by the judgment of others. All poems were submitted to five persons suggested by Dr. Allan Abbott, Professor of English, Teachers College, as competent in the field. The judges were given copies of the poems and definitions of the categories and their subdivisions. The poetry, as given to the judges, was not classified in any way. The judges were instructed to assign the poems to the various categories and their subdivisions without consulting one another. Each judge, acting independently and unaware of the ex-

perimeter's classification of the material, filled out a sheet indicating the placement of the material. No poem that was not similarly placed by four of the five judges was retained in the experimental material. In a fair number of cases there was absolute agreement. In a few cases poems which were similarly placed by four of the judges and considered suitable by the experimenter were rejected because the remaining judge disagreed definitely with the majority opinion.

Certain criteria were held to with fair consistency throughout the selection and the placement of the material. Poems were paired that were of relatively equal length and of comparable subject matter. This could not always be done, either because of a lack of suitable material or because of problems connected with the nature of the poems themselves. For instance, a satirical poem would tend to be more brief than a broadly comic poem because of its nature; similarly, a straight didactic poem would be more brief than a didactic poem in story form as the story form implies elaboration.

In order to avoid previous attitudes toward individual poems which might influence the children in their selection of poems, an effort was made to avoid material that was widely used or commonly known. With the same idea in mind, the names of all authors were omitted as it was assumed that the element of prestige might influence judgment. Insofar as possible, it seemed advisable to face the children with fresh material so that they would have no preconceived ideas and would be forced to make their own decisions. In this way interest elements should emerge. This portion of the selection was almost entirely successful as, when the experiment was run off, only three of the one hundred and twenty poems used were known at all and these not to all the children.

To generalize, the attempt in the study was to differentiate appeals in poetry as clearly as was possible, considering the complex nature of both poetry and critical judgment in regard to it. With this in mind it seemed desirable to group poems into categories on the basis of expert judgment, even though there might be some overlapping in categories and some disagreement as to placement. Such a procedure seemed definitely more justifiable than merely submitting unclassified poems to children and then evaluating their choices, the

method used in certain previous studies. The method of classifying first on the basis of expert judgment has the virtue of defining limits and opening the way for more careful study within these limits.

After the poetry had all been classified by the judges, it was necessary to break it up into ten comparable units, as it was decided that ten days of actual reading of poetry would be adequate to test the appeals under study. One hundred and twenty poems, ten for each subdivision of each of the six categories, were needed for the experiment. More material than this had been classified by the judges as it seemed advisable to allow for a margin in case adjustment should be needed. The problem was twofold; that of pairing, which has already been referred to, and that of making each day's unit of material of equal value in terms of interest to that of every other day. This latter aspect was important as it had been decided to ask for choices for best liked, next best liked, and least liked and next least liked on each day's reading, as well as choices within the pair. Clearly the chance of a poem's being chosen for either best liked or least liked would be affected by the comparative attractiveness of the other poems with which it was placed in competition in the day on which it was read. This organization of the material was done by the experimenter, abiding, naturally, by the classifications made by the judges. Each day's unit contained twelve poems, a pair for each of the six categories included in the study. This organization was used since it allowed for comparison between categories as well as between subdivisions and individual poems. When this grouping into ten units had been done, the organization of the material for this part of the study was complete.

THE PROSE STUDY

Though the investigation was primarily concerned with getting at children's preferences in poetry and their reasons for such preferences, it seemed definitely pertinent to the study to discover to what extent content material influenced their choices. With this in mind, a prose study was devised to see to what extent children's tastes in prose tended to predict their tastes in poetry. That there was a relationship seemed a reasonable assumption on the basis of common experience

as well as on the evidence of earlier studies of children's literary preferences.

The prose study consisted of thirty-two shortened forms of stories or articles held to a limit of from 140 to 160 words each. As two of the categories, Imagery and Sound Effect, could not be paralleled in prose, the remaining four categories were used. This allowed for the representation of each subdivision of each category by four selections. This number was decided upon as by timing it was found that not more than thirty-two selections could be read and judged in fifty minutes, and it seemed advisable to limit the prose study to one period.

The stories and articles in the prose study were written by the experimenter and a young woman who had had experience working with children and who had had stories and articles published in various magazines for young people. The decision to use synthetic material for the prose study was made because only by its use did it seem possible to parallel closely the appeals present in the poems used in the poetry study. Before the writing of the selections was begun, criteria were drawn up to use as a check on material. These criteria were concerned primarily with the problems involved in pairing selections, though first and second choices were also considered. The usefulness of this check list can be seen by examining the synopsis of the more important criteria given below:

1. Variation in reading difficulty, due to differences in vocabulary and in sentence patterns, was avoided. As it was considered safest, all were held to a fairly low reading level. This was done since the purpose of the comparison between prose and poetry was to see if the same interest elements were operative in both. No attempt was made to measure in the prose the effect on preference of different degrees of difficulty in selections.

2. Differences in content appeal in paired selections were avoided by making the subject matter as nearly similar as possible. For instance, in the didactic category a brief essay on the evils of child labor was paired with a story dealing with children who were victims of these evils; an essay on courage was paired with a story of a brave act. In the humor category, a story of a horse was paired

with another story of a horse; a story of a monkey was paired with another story of a monkey. This method was followed meticulously throughout in the pairing.

3. Sex differences were avoided by providing that a story with a girl as the central figure was paired with another story with a girl as the central figure; a story with a boy as the central figure was paired with another story with a boy as a central figure. Also, to provide for first and second choices for preferences, care was taken to see that the central figure was a girl or a boy an equal number of times.

The material, when organized for presentation, was in booklet form. The stories and articles were mimeographed and attractively bound in a colored cover decorated by a block print. The arrangement of the material allowed for immediate comparison of paired selections as these appeared on opposite pages. It allowed, also, for choices of subdivisions of categories, as the titles of all stories or articles similarly classified were grouped together in Section II of the booklet. It further provided for choices of best liked and next best liked of all thirty-two selections. In this latter section of the booklet, space was allowed so that the children might, if they wished, give reasons for their preferences. On the last page of the booklet a choice between poetry and prose as a type of reading was asked for and a place provided for an expression of reason for preference.

PUPIL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

As a further check on children's interests, especially as these might influence their choices of poetry, a pupil interest questionnaire was devised by the experimenter. This covered not only children's interests in typical activities but their racial, social, and economic background as well. The two purposes were combined in a single questionnaire for convenience in administration.

In the questionnaire, as in the prose study, only four of the six categories of the poetry study were paralleled. These were the four that dealt with interests in subject matter. As in the prose study, each subdivision of each category was represented by four items. In all, there were thirty-two items dealing specifically with preferences in

pictures, books, magazines, discussions, and moving pictures. The emphasis fell rather heavily on the moving picture, as it was assumed that a large majority of children today attend moving pictures and that the moving picture would, therefore, represent a common, shared experience. Besides these items, eight titles of books were included, one for each subdivision of each category. These titles, strongly suggestive of the content of the book, were not titles of actual books but titles devised by the experimenter for the questionnaire. Actual titles were avoided for the same reason that familiar material was avoided in the poetry study.

In the first section of the questionnaire appeared an item calling for checking to indicate frequency of attendance at moving pictures. Immediately following this were the sixteen statements calling for a choice between paired items, these items representing the subdivisions of a category. This section cared for choices between pairs and so paralleled in organization both the poetry study and the prose study. In the second section the same items appeared grouped together according to the category subdivision to which they belonged. In this section first and second choices for preferences of groups were asked for. This provided for choices of subdivisions of categories and so was similar in organization to the prose study. In neither study was the subdivision indicated by name. The third section combined items on free reading interests and items on racial and socio-economic background. The first six items covered books, plays, or poems best liked and least liked, the number of books read for recreation in the preceding three months, and the general interest in reading as a leisure-time activity. The remaining thirteen items dealt with racial and socio-economic background. The last section contained the eight titles already mentioned. In this a first and second choice was asked for.

It is obvious that certain difficulties are fundamental in attempting to parallel the appeals involved in either prose or poetry by questionnaire items. One very basic difficulty is involved in the assumption that an appeal can be transferred from the auditory to the visual without affecting its nature. As many of the items in the questionnaire were based upon moving picture preferences, this is important

in this connection. For instance, in the matter of a choice between romantic and commonplace subject matter, romantic subject matter in either prose or poetry, but more particularly in poetry, may not be liked because the individual hearing it or reading it may not have sufficient imagination or adequate enough background to call up the visual images necessary for appreciation. In the moving picture the visualization has been taken care of by the producer. Moreover, romantic material in moving pictures is often presented in a way that would seem more beautiful and appealing to a child than would the moving picture that dealt with the commonplace and the near at hand. Emotional tone, then, as well as visualization is involved. In the matter of evaluating the appeal of different kinds of humor by questionnaire items, an equally serious difficulty is involved. Humor can hardly be stated, or taken out of its setting, without losing its character. Nevertheless, despite the obvious inadequacies of the questionnaire and the danger involved in relying too heavily on any findings resulting from its use, it seemed desirable to use it. With all its weaknesses it represented another approach to the question of children's interest in subject matter. It seemed probable that it might help to illuminate certain problems in the poetry study.

The materials as organized for the study consisted, then, of the ten units of poetry, the prose booklet, and the questionnaire. As the primary purpose of the study was to discover children's interests in poetry, the prose study and the questionnaire were considered as only secondary investigations undertaken as aids to the main study.

CHAPTER IV

Organization of the Experiment

THE experiment, which was conducted in Bellingham, Washington, extended over a period of approximately seven and a half weeks, from February 1 to March 24, 1937. It was initiated on the first of February, as the second semester had begun in the schools the previous week and consequently classes were organized by that time. An earlier date would have involved conflict with holidays and the break between semesters. A later date would have meant that the spring vacation would divide the experiment, not to mention the danger of interruptions from the program of sports and allied activities. The date set was fortunate from another standpoint. The principals in the four co-operating schools worked out their class schedules in such a way that it was possible to meet all ten groups used in the experiment within the limit of a week. In some cases this actually meant building the schedule to fit in with the experiment. Without such co-operation it would have been impossible to include all the eighth grade children in the public schools of the city as two problems would have been involved, conflict between classes and the distance between schools.

For ease of reference, an outline of the general organization of the experiment is given. Individual aspects of this organization will be elaborated in subsequent discussions, but a brief initial statement of the type here given seems necessary to make clear to the reader at the outset the main outlines of the experiment.

SET-UP OF THE EXPERIMENT

I. Place: Bellingham, Washington.

a. Population, slightly over 32,000.

b. Economic background, primarily industrial. Chief industries are lumbering, fishing, and manufacture of paper products. The city

has, however, resources coming from the farming country that surrounds it.

- c. Economic status, average or slightly below. Relief rolls and other indices show that the city is less prosperous than other cities in the state.
- d. Racial background, largely North European, but American-born. Predominant nationality groups are American, British, and Scandinavian.

II. Subjects, all eighth grade children in the public schools of Bellingham, Washington, in the spring of 1937.

- A. Total enrollment, 361 children in ten classes in four schools:
 - 1. In Roeder, the only junior high school in the city, 185 cases distributed in five classes.
 - 2. In Lowell, 75 cases in two classes.
 - 3. In Franklin, 75 cases in two classes.
 - 4. In Roosevelt, 26 cases in one class.
- B. Variations in attendance. The highest number participating in any part of the experiment was 355. During the poetry reading the attendance ranged from 292 to 342, with a median of 328.

III. Organization of Materials.

- A. Poetry: The poems to be used for each experimental period were mimeographed on separate sheets and stapled together in the order in which they were to be read. All children were furnished with the poems to be used during that period.
- B. Preference Sheets: Mimeographed preference sheets were provided the children at each experimental period. These made provision for choices between pairs, and for choices for best liked, next best liked; least liked and next least liked; and for reasons for choices of best liked and least liked. The form of these remained constant for the ten days' reading of poetry, but the titles of the poems were, of course, different. For the two periods devoted to resubmission of well-liked poems, a simpler form of preference sheet was used. This called only for choices for best liked and next best liked.

A reproduction of the preference sheet used on the fourth day of the experiment appears below. This is similar to all preference sheets used except those made for choices on resubmissions.

PREFERENCE SHEET

Name of School Pupil

Date What language is spoken in your home?

Fill in the blanks above.

Put a check (✓) in the square by the title of the poem you prefer. If you knew any of the poems before they were read to you today, draw a circle around the square that is placed after the title. Do not do this until the poem has been read.

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The Rabbit | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Tarantella | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Song for Snow | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Eve | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I've Got a Dog | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. The Shark and the Flying | |
| 4. The Tarry Buccaneer | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fish | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The Man He Killed | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. A Terrible Enfant | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The Unpardonable Sin | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. In Praise of Apple Trees .. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | 12. Fog | <input type="checkbox"/> |

DO NOT FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW UNTIL YOU HAVE HEARD ALL THE
POEMS TODAY.

Of all the poems read today I like best number, the title of which
is I like it best because.....
I like next best number, the title of which is.....
because

Of all the poems read today I like least number, the title of which
is I like it least because

I like next least number, the title of which is
because

If you do not know why you liked or disliked the poems you selected,
simply make your choice, but do not try to fill in the blank after *because*.

If you have any comments to make about any of the poems, you may put
them in the space below.

c. Prose: All material bound in a booklet that provided for the fol-
lowing choices:

1. Choices on paired selections placed on pages opposite each
other. Choices were indicated by placing a check in a square
below the preferred selection.

2. Choices for best liked and next best liked of kind of material according to subject matter. For this, titles of selections were grouped according to their subdivisions. Preferences were indicated by putting a 1 or a 2 in the blank provided.
3. Choice for best liked and next best liked of individual selections.
4. Choice of prose or poetry as a preferred form of reading matter.
- D. Pupil Interest Questionnaire: A five-page questionnaire covering preferences in eight subdivisions of categories, interest in and extent of reading, and socio-economic background.
- E. Instructions to Principals and Teachers: All participating principals and teachers were furnished with mimeographed instructions stressing the following points:
 1. Importance of not indicating in any way their preferences for any of the material used in the experiment and of not discussing the experiment with the pupils until it was concluded.
 2. Necessity for seeing that the class was not disturbed during any experimental period.
 3. Value of maintaining as natural and friendly an atmosphere as possible during all experimental periods.
- F. Instructions to Pupils: Instructions to the pupils were prepared in written form and read to them. These fell into two main divisions as follows:
 1. Explanation of the general purpose of the experiment and a request for their cooperation throughout it. This was used on the first experimental period.
 2. Directions for following reading and marking preference sheets. These were detailed on the first day but were made fairly brief as the experiment proceeded. They covered the following points:
 - a. To read silently as the reader read.
 - b. To wait to turn to the next poem until told to do so.
 - c. To wait to mark preference sheets until told to do so.
 - d. To mark preference sheets without consulting others and to refrain from either looking to see how others had chosen or showing others how they had chosen.

- e. To ignore pair placement in making choices for best liked and least liked, choosing from the group of twelve poems as a whole.

IV. Conduct of the Experiment.

A. Poetry

1. Reading of Poetry: All poetry was read aloud to all groups by a trained reader employed by the experimenter. A satisfactory oral interpretation of each poem was worked out jointly by the reader and the experimenter and this interpretation was held to exactly for the reading to all ten groups. A reader was employed in order to avoid the influence on judgment of differences in ability to read orally that would inevitably be found in any group of teachers. It was recognized that this procedure not only reduced reading difficulty and so varied from the normal reading of poetry, but also tended to give an advantage in presentation to poems that profited most from an oral interpretation. It seemed, however, considering the wide differences in reading comprehension in the group, plus the probable differences in ability in oral reading among the teachers, clearly the better of the two alternatives.
2. Timing: A stop watch was used and an exact timing was held to throughout the ten days of poetry reading. After the reading of the first poem in each pair, a pause of thirty seconds was allowed for the children to reread the poem from their copy. After the reading of the second poem, a pause of one minute was made to allow for a rereading of the poem just heard, a comparison of it with the poem with which it was paired, and a marking by each child on his preference sheet his choice of the two poems. When all twelve poems for the day had been heard, the children were allowed all the time they wished for making their choices for best liked, next best liked, and for least liked and next least liked, and for stating their reasons for choices on these.
3. Resubmissions of Best-liked Poems: On the sixth experimental period a group of ten poems, the two best-liked poems from

each of the preceding five periods, were resubmitted. In these, choices were asked for best liked and next best liked only. On the twelfth experimental period, a second group of ten poems, comprising the two best liked from each of the five groups read during the second half of the experiment, were resubmitted. In these, as in the poems used for the first resubmission, choices for best-liked and next-best-liked poems were asked for. In both these resubmissions the poems were read aloud and preference sheets were marked.

4. Use of Themes: At the conclusion of the poetry reading portion of the experiment, a group of twenty poems, made up of the two previous groups of ten best-liked poems, was resubmitted. For this, a choice of one best liked was asked for. The children were furnished writing materials and asked to write a theme telling why the poem they had chosen was the one best liked by them. The poems were not read aloud in this period, but the children were given copies of them.
5. Use of Interviews: A representative sampling of slightly more than ten per cent of the children in the experiment were interviewed and the conversations were taken down in shorthand. These interviews covered not only poems included in the experimental material but general interests in poetry as well.
6. Use of Discussions: When all interviews had been held, ten periods, one for each class in the experiment, were devoted to a discussion of poems in the experimental material, and poetry interests in general.

As no mention was made in the discussions of the division of the poetry into categories and subdivisions, it can hardly be assumed that the discussions affected choices in the prose study. Throughout the experiment the children were given no specific information in regard to the nature of the study. They were simply told that the experimenter wanted to know what kinds of poems boys and girls really like.

B. Prose

1. Pairs: The paired prose selections were read aloud by the

reader while the children read silently from their own booklets. Choices between paired selections were made by checking the booklets themselves in the indicated spaces.

2. Choices in Three Remaining Sections of Booklet: These sections were not read aloud, since they covered only choices of groups of titles, single titles, and types of reading.

c. Pupil Interest Questionnaire

For this, instructions were read aloud, but the questionnaire was filled out by the children themselves.

Certain aspects of the poetry experiment, not included in the outline, should be given here as they bear upon later discussions of the results. One of these is the fact that the poems were collected at the close of each experimental period. This was done as it was felt that familiarity with the material might tend to invalidate choices made on the three resubmissions. Another aspect pertinent to later portions of the study was the provision made in the organization of the material for rotation of appeals.

Though there was little reason to fear that placement would influence judgment when only twelve poems were included in each unit of material, the precaution was taken of using three types of reversal. The classes were divided into three subgroups to provide for three forms of reversal in placement. These subgroups, called A, B, and C, were made up as follows:

The A group, composed of five classes, two in Roeder and one each in Lowell, Franklin, and Roosevelt, contained 175 children.

The B group, composed of three classes at Roeder, contained 111 children.

The C group, composed of one class at Lowell and one at Franklin, contained 75 children.

The twelve poems in each day's reading were presented in different sequences to the three groups. If for convenience the largest group, the A group, is taken for a point of reference, the reversals were as follows:

1. In the B group the position within the pair was reversed from the order of the A group, but the category sequence was the same.

2. In the C group the position within the pair remained the same as in the A group, but the order of the categories was reversed.

These three forms of reversals allowed for comparison of the effect on choice of position within the pair and position within the group of twelve. The rotation of categories could not be entirely consistent since there were ten units of experimental material and only six categories. The method used was to give each category the first position in turn through the first six experimental periods. From the seventh through the tenth periods the only precaution taken was to see that no category was repeated within the groupings for these four days in either the first or the last position.

CHAPTER V

Background of the Children in the Study

SINCE the background of the children in the group may conceivably have had some influence on their preferences in poetry as well as their interests in reading and related activities of a cultural nature, it seems appropriate to present data obtained on this subject. This discussion has been limited to the following aspects: nationality of the children and birthplace of their parents; socio-economic status of the homes; and educational status of the children.

NATIONALITY OF THE PARENTS

All the children included in the study were American-born, but the parents represented a wide variety of nationalities. Slightly more than 11 per cent of the children had parents both of whom were foreign-born. The influence of the foreign-born parent or parents was probably less significant than these figures would seem to indicate, as one-eighth of the cases listed as having foreign-born parents were British by descent. In addition, about one-sixth of those children who listed one parent as foreign-born gave Canada or the British Isles as the homeland of the parent. In such instances, wide differences in culture and language background would not be assumed.

The nationality groupings can be seen if Table 1 on page 34 is consulted. In this table are listed first the cases in which both parents are of the same nationality. Following these are those in which two nationalities are represented. In order to avoid confusing length in the table, cases that reported a mixture of three or four nationalities were classified as such without further definition. The scattering of cases which represented in each instance less than 1 per cent of either a single nationality or a mixture of nationalities, are grouped under "Others," as separate listings would have extended the table unduly.

TABLE I
NATIONALITY BACKGROUND OF PUPILS

Nationalities of Parents	Native or Foreign Born Parents							
	Nationalities		Both Native Born		One Native Born		Both Foreign Born	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
American	53	14.9	53	14.9	0	0	0	0
British	69	19.4	55	15.4	9	2.5	5	1.4
German	8	2.2	6	1.7	1	0.3	1	0.3
Jewish	4	1.1	0	0	0	0	4	1.1
Scandinavian . .	46	12.9	14	3.9	12	3.4	20	5.6
American-Ger- man	5	1.4	4	1.1	1	0.3	0	0
American-Scan- dinavian	4	1.1	2	0.6	2	0.6	0	0
British-Dutch . .	16	4.5	15	4.2	1	0.3	0	0
British-French . .	16	4.5	12	3.4	3	0.8	1	0.3
British-German . .	25	7.0	23	6.5	2	0.6	0	0
British-Scandi- navian	22	6.2	15	4.2	6	1.7	1	0.3
German-Scandi- navian	13	3.6	9	2.5	4	1.1	0	0
Three National- ities	34	9.6	30	8.4	4	1.1	0	0
Four National- ities	5	1.4	4	1.1	1	0.3	0	0
Others*	35	9.9	13	3.7	14	3.9	8	2.8

* Under *Others* are included eight cases in which one parent was American by descent; seven in which one parent was British. The remaining twenty include several nationality mixtures, Canadian, Dutch, Greek, Polish, Slavonian, and Japanese.

It will be noted that the dominant nationality groups are, in the order named, British, American, and Scandinavian. Under British were grouped English, Irish, Scotch, and Welsh. Under Scandinavian were grouped Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish.

ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE GROUP

The economic status of the children was determined by a tabulation of responses given to questions included as items in the questionnaire used. While it is always a little hazardous to place too much

reliance on children's responses to questions of this sort, it seems reasonable to assume that the total data so compiled give a fair picture of the group. This appears to be warranted by the fact that the estimate so derived coincides rather closely with what is known of the economic status of the city as a whole.

The Sims Socio-Economic Rating Card was used to classify the occupations of the fathers. Despite the fairly elaborate definitions given under each grouping on the Sims Card, some difficulty was encountered in using it, as certain occupations, notably those associated with lumbering and fishing, were not classified. These had to be estimated by comparison with occupations listed. A further difficulty, one undoubtedly common to all analyses of questionnaire items, was that involved in interpreting generalized answers. Frequently a child put down that his father worked at the mill or at the furniture factory without specifying the type of work done. Such responses, as well as those that gave occupations associated with lumbering and fishing, were put under unskilled labor. This may have resulted in making the lower group seem larger than it actually was. An additional grouping had to be used for those children whose fathers were either dead or no longer living with their families.

The occupations of the fathers, as classified by the Sims score card, were as follows:

I Professional	2.8%
II Commercial	8.5
III Artisan proprietors	18.3
IV Skilled laborers	30.4
V Unskilled laborers	27.9
Not known, dead, etc.	12.1
Total (355 cases)	100.0%

An examination of these figures seems to indicate that the group was somewhat below average in economic status, but, as has been stated, it is highly possible that several cases grouped under unskilled labor would have been shown with skilled labor had more adequate data been available.

The questionnaire contained items that asked for the number of people living in the home and the number of rooms in the house.

These items were treated together. The number of rooms per person was computed for each child's home and a frequency table made. The median so computed showed 1.11 rooms for each person in the home.

Five additional items bearing on the socio-economic status were used. As these cannot be effectively generalized, they will be given in the form in which they appeared in the questionnaire. These, with the results expressed in percentages, are as follows:

	Yes	No
Do you take music or dancing lessons?	39.7%	60.3%
Do you have a radio at home?	95.8	4.2
Do you have a piano?	47.0	53.0
Do you have a telephone?	46.5	53.5
Does your family have an automobile?	78.0%	22.0%

The first item, that covering lessons in music or dancing, was also treated separately for girls and for boys; as it was considered that, in the popular mind, music and dancing lessons more nearly approached a necessity for girls than it did for boys. This tabulation showed that 48.9 per cent of the girls in the group had private lessons in either music or dancing while only 29.6 per cent of the boys had such lessons.

A check of the remaining four items shows that the most common luxuries in the families of these children are, in the order named, radios, automobiles, telephones, and pianos, the last two being practically equal in number. The radio, since all but 4.2 per cent of the children have one in their homes, can hardly be held to be significant as an indication of superior economic status.

A degree of caution must be observed in interpreting these and similar items in the questionnaire. It is obviously impossible to apply any single measure of economic well-being to a community and assume that the results can be compared to the results of the same measure applied elsewhere, for local conditions vary widely. For instance, the fact that 78 per cent of the families of these children had automobiles might suggest that they were a relatively privileged group. Such an assumption would hardly be warranted as in a city like Bellingham, which has a rural area surrounding it and a fairly scattered population, an automobile is likely to represent an almost necessary means

of transportation. The same is applicable to the matter of housing. In a small city the number of rooms per person is not as indicative as it would be in a large city.

The number of books in the home was checked by an item that dealt with approximate numbers only. The results of this were as follows:

None	2.8%
Few	27.9
About 50	29.9
About 100	22.3
More than 100	17.2%

The fact that 30.7 per cent of the children reported that there were few or no books in their homes seems at first glance rather startling. It is, however, probably representative of a fairly common situation and one that does not necessarily denote an absence of reading habits in the family, for many people with small incomes depend upon the public library for almost all their reading matter. The per cent reporting a hundred or more books in the home is substantially above what might be expected according to the occupation groupings.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE GROUP

The educational status of the group was determined by a combination of school records, test scores, and responses to questionnaire items in regard to interest in reading and amount of voluntary reading done. The only test scores available were those made in the second month of the seventh grade. As the experiment was conducted in the sixth and seventh months of the eighth grade, the scores must be used as indicative rather than as absolute measures. Undoubtedly there would have been some gains in the intervening period of more than a year. Moreover, test scores were available for only 298 of the children in the experiment.

The results of the items used to determine the educational status of the group were as follows:

Chronological age at time of experiment, sixth month of eighth grade,
352 cases—range 11.11 to 17.7, median 13.9.
Reading Comprehension, Modern School Achievement Tests, second

month of seventh grade, 298 cases—range 2.5 to above 10, median 7.3.

Per cent of those who enjoyed reading, 355 cases—88.2%.

Number of books read voluntarily in previous three months, 355 cases—median 2.9.

The total impression given by these figures is that the children represented a fairly average group. There is the usual wide spread in chronological age and in scores in reading comprehension. A similar spread exists in scores in other school subjects, but these were not used, as they seemed to bear little relation to the problem under consideration. It would have been desirable to include records on intelligence tests, but these were not available.

The report on interest in reading as a leisure-time activity indicates that the group is slightly less interested in reading than were other groups of similar age who have been studied in earlier investigations. Likewise, the amount of reading is slightly below that reported in several earlier studies. It is highly probable that both these differences are accounted for by the fact that the moving picture and the radio have recently become important consumers of leisure time. In this group more than 96 per cent attend moving pictures with some degree of regularity and about 96 per cent have radios in their homes. Such factors, rather than anything more fundamental, probably account for what differences there are.

CHAPTER VI

Factors Related to the Reliability of the Ranking of Poetry

AS THE rank method was used throughout the investigation in the treatment of first and second choices, it seemed desirable to check the reliability of the ranks in several different ways. The approaches taken to this problem were as follows:

1. Correlation of rankings of split halves of the total group.
2. Intercorrelations between the rankings of groups A, B, and C to determine the effect on preference of placement patterns in material, and examination of rank differences of individual poems when these showed marked variations in placement by groups. Check on reversals in pair choices to evaluate the effect on preference of sequence in pairs.
3. Correlation of rankings of children not absent during any experimental period with rankings of total group to measure the influence of variability of attendance.
4. Correlation of rankings of two schools in different neighborhoods to measure the effect of environmental factors as those operated within the group.

A comparison was made of the correlation obtained by the use of the Spearman Rank Difference Formula* with correlations obtained by the Pearson Product Moment† method of correlation. For this, not ranks but actual differences in percentages were used. The purpose of this was to see whether unequal percentage differences in distances between ranks made correlations based on ranks unreliable.

Factors other than these, notably sex differences and differences in reading comprehension, also affected rankings, but, as they are of another nature, they will be discussed elsewhere.

$$* \rho = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)} \quad \dagger r = \frac{\sum xy}{N\sigma_x\sigma_y}$$

The fundamental method of estimating choices in this study, whether for best liked or least liked, was that of ranking based on percentages of first plus second choices. In this, because of variability in attendance, each day was considered as a unit, and the 120 poems were ranked on the basis of the percentage of choices each poem had received in its own experimental period. In the prose study and the questionnaire, ranks were likewise based on percentages of first and second choices. With these, however, the problem of a variable attendance was not involved, as each consumed but one experimental period.

In deriving percentages, first and second choices were treated as though they were of equal value. Consequently, though they are referred to throughout as first and second choices, they are, in effect, two choices for best liked and two choices for least liked. The decision to adopt this method was made only after prolonged experimentation had proved that it was not only highly defensible, but also best adapted to the investigation in hand.

To decide upon the proper evaluation of first and second choices, three methods were experimented with. These were as follows:

1. Consider first choices only.
2. Give first choices double value and add second choices.
3. Consider first and second choices as being of equal value.

The first method seemed undesirable as it eliminated second choices, and these should be indicative when made, as in the poetry, from a group of twelve. The second method, as it involved weighting, raised problems of value that were impossible to solve. It assumed that a first choice was twice as significant as a second choice. Moreover, weighting made the manipulation of findings cumbersome without adding demonstrably to their significance.

In order to determine what effect the adoption of any one of these methods would have, the 120 poems were ranked by all three methods and the rankings correlated by the Spearman Rank Difference Method.* Stated arithmetically, the three methods were as follows:

Method I: 1st choices $\div N = \%$.

Method II: 2 (1st choices) + 2nd choices $\div N = \text{Proportion}$

Method III: (1st choices + 2nd choices) $\div 2N = \%$

* $\rho = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$

It will be noted that N in Method III is doubled. This was done to take care of the fact that each child had, in effect, two votes.

When intercorrelations were made on the three sets of rankings based on the three methods, they proved to be sufficiently high to indicate that all three methods were equally justifiable from a statistical standpoint. The correlations were as follows:

Methods I and II, $.98 \pm .01$

Methods I and III, $.96 \pm .01$

Methods II and III, $.99 \pm .01$

RESULTS OBTAINED BY TWO METHODS OF CORRELATION

As a check on the percentage on which ranks were based indicated that the distances between ranks did not represent equal values, it seemed desirable to check the reliability of correlations based on ranks by comparing results obtained by the Pearson Product Moment method of correlation. For this comparison, the correlation between rankings based on preferences of boys and girls was selected. This choice seemed a good one as the actual rankings indicated that the intervals between ranks, in terms of percentage, were fairly unequal. The comparison showed that there was no significant difference between the results obtained by the two methods. By the Spearman Rank Difference Method, the correlation between boys and girls was $.81 \pm .02$; by the Pearson Product Moment method, the correlation was $.80 \pm .02$.

THE EFFECT OF PLACEMENT ON PREFERENCE

As the three forms of reversal used in the presentation of poetry have been outlined in Chapter IV, it will suffice here to state that the comparison of the effect of reversal within the pair was between the A and B groups, and the comparison of the effect of reversal of categories between the A and C groups. A and B are therefore comparable on a pair basis and A and C on the basis of first and second choices.

The twelve poems that composed each day's experimental unit were presented in three different sequences in order to avoid placement influencing choice. The questions implied in these organizations of ma-

terial were these: Does a poem profit in a pair choice by being read first or second in the pair? Does a poem stand a better chance of being preferred if it appears early or late in a unit of experimental material?

An attempt to answer these questions, at least insofar as they concerned the present study, was made by employing the procedure outlined below:

1. The number of times pairs actually reversed themselves in groups A and B was checked and percentage noted to see whether these indicated that first or second position was the preferred one.
2. Rankings of individual poems between A and C were compared to see if these showed whether early or late placement was favorable.
3. Intercorrelation of rankings of A, B, and C were computed to measure the influence of placement on preference.

In making the comparison between A and B on the pair basis, the criterion used was a reversal of direction of choice. A check on pair choices made in the A and B groups revealed the following facts:

1. Four pairs, in the sixty pairs presented, reversed their direction between A and B.
2. Three pairs had an equal per cent of votes for each member in either group A or group B.
3. The second position was the preferred one in three of the four pairs that reversed themselves.
4. The second position was the preferred one in two of the three pairs in which choices were equal in one group or the other.

These findings seem to indicate that the second position is the favored one in a pair situation. However, two factors must be kept in mind in considering the significance of reversals within the pair: the influence of sex, and the instability of choices made when indifference is the fundamental reaction. As the A group contained 78 girls and 77 boys, and the B group contained 54 girls and 46 boys, sex was very possibly a constant factor in determining choices.

The constant difficulty of making comparisons between these two

groups because of the greater proportion of girls in the B group could have been avoided if, for purposes of drawing conclusions on the results of this portion of the experiment, additional tabulations had been made. For this, preference sheets could have been selected in such a way that the proportion of the sexes would be the same in both groups. This, however, was not done. Consequently, the persistent influence of sex differences in preferences remains a confusing factor in estimating the effect of placement.

The influence of sex and the effect of indifference are suggested by the following:

1. No poem that was so definitely liked as to place within the top 25 per cent for the total group reversed its direction within the pair.
2. Only one pair that fell within the top 50 per cent for the total group reversed its direction, and this pair contained poems with high critical ratios for sex difference.
3. All pairs that reversed themselves contained poems that had critical ratios of over four for sex difference except one, and this one contained poems so little liked as to rank 101 and 102 for preference in the total group.
4. The three pairs that had an even division of votes in one group or the other contained poems with the critical ratios of over four for sex difference.

There seems, then, to be some slight evidence to suggest that a poem profits by being in the second position in a pair. This appears to operate, however, only when indifference is the reaction. Sex seems to be a more significant factor in determining choice within a pair than does placement.

In evaluating the influence of placement on preference in categories as indicated by first and second choices for best liked, the criterion adopted was a shift in rank of more than ten places. Selection of the standard of ten places was purely arbitrary. This standard was adopted because an inspection of the tables indicated that the use of fewer than ten places would result in too confusingly large a number of shifts to be considered effectively. For this, only the 72 poems read during the first six experimental periods were used. The comparison

was confined to these as in them the category reversal was carried out exactly. In the last four days a reversal was only approximated in the categories, though held to in the pairs. Of the 72 poems used during the first six experimental periods, 34 showed a difference in ranking between groups A and C of more than ten places. Of these 34, there were 16 with critical ratios of over four for sex difference.

The effect of placement can be better determined, however, if rankings on poems that appeared in the first two pairs and the last two pairs are considered separately, as these should show most clearly the effect of placement. As the purpose is to see whether a poem profited by being read near the opening or near the close of an experimental period, it would be assumed that differences between pairs five and four would not be indicative. When the material is thus reduced to the 48 poems that appeared in positions 1 through 4 and 9 through 12, there remain 23 poems with rank differences of more than ten places between groups A and C. Of these, 12 have critical ratios of over four for sex difference. In 16 cases poems received a higher ranking when they appeared in positions 9 through 12; in 7 cases poems received lower rankings when they appeared in these positions.

There seems to be some evidence that a poem suffered by being placed in one of the first four positions in a unit of experimental material. The tendency in this direction is too consistent to be attributed entirely to other factors or mere chance. However, with these choices for preference, as with the pair votes, certain considerations must be kept in mind. These are:

1. Eleven of the 23 poems that had shifts of rank within the limits set, ranked in the lower half for both groups A and C. Differences in rank in the lower half seem to be less indicative than differences in rank in the upper half for preference with both groups A and C.
2. Sex differences in preference operate as a constant factor in ranking. Four of the 6 poems showing differences in ranking in the top 25 per cent for either group A or group C had critical ratios of over four for sex difference.
3. The power of a poem to arouse erratic responses often led to a

difference in rank position. This was especially true of poems classified in the humor or the sound effect category.

When correlations between the groups are considered as measures of the effect of placement, these seem to bear out certain conclusions drawn from an inspection of the rankings. For instance, correlations between the groups are consistently higher than the correlation between the rankings of the sexes. If Table 2 B on page 46 is examined, it will be noted that the correlation between groups A and C, in which the order of the poems was reversed, is $.87 \pm .01$. As the correlation between ranks based on preferences of all boys and all girls in the entire experimental group was $.81 \pm .02$, this and other inter-group correlations seem to suggest that sex may be more significant than placement in influencing preferences. The correlations between rankings of boys and girls in the same group point in the same direction. In every case the girls in any one group agree more closely with the girls of any other group than they do with the boys of their own group. This can be seen by comparing Tables 2 B and 2 C.

However, there is some evidence in the correlations to suggest that placement may have been a factor in influencing first and second choices. It will be noted, for instance, that there is a higher correlation between A and B, in which poems were reversed within the pair but category sequence remained the same, than between A and C. It will be noted, also, that the lowest inter-group correlation is between B and C. In these the organization of the material was most completely different as both pair position and category sequence were reversed. In estimating the significance of these correlations, the stabilizing effect of larger groups on rankings must be considered. It will be noted, for instance, that A and B had an average attendance of 156 and 100 respectively, while B and C had an average attendance of only 100 and 69 respectively.

COMPARISON OF SPLIT HALVES

In order to test the reliability of the rankings, the preference sheets for the ten days in which poetry was read were divided into two groups on the odds and evens basis. For this boys' and girls' sheets

TABLE 2 A

PLACEMENT OF POEMS AS PRESENTED TO SUB-GROUPS A, B, AND C AND
THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN EACH GROUP

Group	Placement of Poems	Average Number in Group		
		All Pupils	Boys	Girls
A	Control	156	77	79
B	Reversal within Pairs	100	46	64
C	Reversal of Categories	69	32	37

TABLE 2 B

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RANKINGS OF 120 POEMS BY SUB-GROUPS FOR
ALL PUPILS, FOR BOYS, FOR GIRLS

Sub-groups	All Pupils	Boys	Girls
A with B .....	.90 \pm .01	.83 \pm .02	.87 \pm .02
A with C .....	.87 \pm .02	.77 \pm .02	.86 \pm .02
B with C .....	.84 \pm .02	.76 \pm .03	.84 \pm .02

TABLE 2 C

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RANKINGS OF
120 POEMS BY BOYS AND GIRLS
IN SUB-GROUPS A, B, AND C

Sub-groups	Boys and Girls
Group A .....	.81 \pm .02
Group B .....	.72 \pm .03
Group C .....	.67 \pm .03

for each class were separated. These were then divided on the odds and evens basis. The boys' and girls' sheets were then reassembled in such a way as to make two groups with an equal proportion of boys and girls in each. In this manner the total group was split into chance halves. The preferences, when tallied, were converted into percentages and used as the basis of ranking. An inspection of these two rankings indicated that they were very similar, there being only a few cases in which rankings were markedly different. A correlation of the two rankings by the Spearman Rank Difference Method yielded an r of .94 \pm .01.

COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS

As a check on the effect on preference of differences in school organization and of variations in classroom procedures due to the influence of teachers and their selection and presentation of poetry, a correlation was made of the respective rankings of the Lowell and Franklin schools. These schools were selected as they represented groups of comparable size, there being 75 cases in each school. There were, however, two other factors that may have affected preferences in these schools. The children of the Lowell School were, from an economic standpoint, a relatively more privileged group than were the children of the Franklin School. Though Bellingham, being a small city, contains no great number of either the markedly privileged or the markedly underprivileged and consequently lacks the stratification in terms of residence districts that prevails in larger cities, the Lowell School does draw for its school population upon a neighborhood that contains the homes of the comfortably well-to-do, while the Franklin School draws upon a less prosperous district. The other factor that may have affected preference was that of sex. In the Lowell School the girls constituted about 65 per cent of the cases, while in the Franklin School they constituted only slightly over 40 per cent.

A correlation made on the rankings for preference of 120 poems by the children of the Franklin and the Lowell schools by the Spearman Rank Difference Method yielded an r of $.90 \pm .01$. Since sex and environmental factors outside the school situation may very conceivably have affected choices, this correlation suggests that the combined effect of school organization and teacher influence was not markedly significant. This was in accord with the judgment of the experimenter, as careful observation of the two schools suggested that the only marked differences between them were in buildings and equipment. The Lowell School is newer and more attractive than the Franklin School.

THE INFLUENCE OF VARIABILITY OF ATTENDANCE
UPON RANKINGS

As all rankings, correlations of rankings, and critical ratios were based on numbers that varied from one period to another as attendance

varied, it seemed desirable to retabulate separately the preference sheets of all those children who were present during all ten experimental periods in which poetry was read. A comparison of rankings based on the preferences of this smaller group and the rankings based on the preferences of the total group should indicate to what extent variability in attendance influenced preferences.

A recheck of the preference sheets showed that 179 children, 100 girls and 79 boys, had been present at all experimental periods. The small number of cases was due to the fact that the experiment ran over a period of more than seven and a half weeks. It was inevitable that if cases were dropped for a single absence, few would remain.

All the 120 poems were reranked on the basis of the preferences of this group. These rankings were then correlated with the rankings based on the entire group. Correlations were made for totals, boys, and girls. These correlations were as follows:

For total $r = .98 \pm .01$

For boys' $r = .96 \pm .01$

For girls' $r = .97 \pm .01$

These correlations seem to indicate that a variable attendance had no significant influence on the rankings given poems. It is recognized, however, that all these correlations are in part self-correlations as the smaller group was part of the entire group with which it was correlated.

CHAPTER VII

Preferences in Category Subdivisions

BEFORE attempting any refinement of interpretation of preferences for individual poems, prose selections, or items in the Pupil Interest Questionnaire, it seems desirable to give the broad outlines of the findings by presenting an analysis of preferences for subdivisions of the categories. This discussion will cover three main points: the differences between the preferences for the *a* and *b* subdivisions as these appear in poetry, prose, and the questionnaire; the relative popularity of the appeals tested by the subdivisions of the categories in poetry, prose, and the questionnaire; and similarities and differences in ranking of subdivisions in these three types of material. As the first of these points is concerned only with the difference between the *a* and *b* subdivisions and does not take into consideration the ranking of subdivisions for preference, it will be treated separately.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *A* AND *B* SUBDIVISIONS

Three methods were used to compare the differences in preference for the *a* and *b* subdivisions in all three types of material used in the study. These were as follows:

1. The number of times preferences were in favor of the *a* or *b* subdivision in poems, prose selections, or questionnaire items actually paired.
2. The percentage of choices in favor of *a* or *b* in pair votes.
3. The percentage of choices in favor of *a* or *b* in votes for best liked and next best liked.

The results of the application of these methods to the three types of material used in the study will be presented separately according to the type of material.

POETRY

Method 1. Choices between paired poems were absolutely equal in one instance and in favor of the *a* subdivision in 52 of the 60 pairs.

Method 2. Choices ran consistently and definitely in favor of the *a* subdivision. The results obtained by the use of this method can be readily seen if column 1 in Table 3 on page 51 is checked. This method reduced all 120 poems included in the experiment to six synthetic pairs, one for each category used. All pair votes cast for the ten poems included in a subdivision were added, and percentage was computed for each subdivision by dividing the sum of its pair votes by 3,248, the bulked attendance for the ten experimental periods in which poetry was read. The *a* and *b* subdivisions in each category were thus made comparable. This treatment of data on pairs smoothed out differences in appeal in poems classified in the same subdivision and so helped to indicate main outlines.

Method 3. When the third method was applied, the decision was once more in favor of the *a* subdivision. For this, the percentages of choices for best liked and next best liked were considered in relation to the *a* and *b* subdivisions. As in the pair votes, all material was reduced to six synthetic pairs, one for each category. An examination of Table 3 will show the results of this treatment of data. Two approaches were used in this method. These were as follows:

1. Each category was considered in relation to every other category and preferences for its *a* and *b* subdivisions were estimated in terms of these. For instance, the humor category received 22.4 per cent of all votes cast for first or second choice. Of these, 14.6 per cent were for obvious humor and 7.8 per cent for subtle humor. The comparison of the relative appeal of the subdivisions of the humor category was based, therefore, on these two percentages.

2. Each category was considered as a separate unit. The percentage for a subdivision was computed by dividing the number of votes cast for it by the number of votes cast for the category of which it was a member. For instance, 1,451 votes were cast for the humor category. Of these, 65.2 per cent were for obvious humor and 34.8 per cent for subtle humor. These percentages constituted the basis for the pair treatment of preferences as shown in column 5 of Table 3.

TABLE 3
DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR SUB-
DIVISIONS OF CATEGORIES IN POETRY AS MEASURED BY CRITICAL
RATIOS COMPUTED ON THREE BASES

Category	Subdivision	PAIR CHOICES		FIRST PLUS SECOND CHOICES			
		% of Category Choices ^a	C. R. ^a	% of Total Choices ^b	C. R. ^d	% of Choices within Category ^c	C. R. ^e
Humor	Obvious	67.3	31.5	14.6	18.6	65.2	18.3
	Subtle	32.7		7.8		34.8	
Didactic	Story	73.3	45.1	10.9	31.0	83.4	39.3
	Straight	26.7		2.2		16.6	
Subject Matter	Commonplace	61.6	20.4	15.0	16.6	63.2	16.0
	Romantic	38.4		8.7		36.8	
Nature	Center of interest . .	74.1	46.9	9.4	21.7	73.8	23.4
	No center of interest	25.9		3.3		26.2	
Sound Effect	Obvious	70.3	38.1	16.3	35.7	80.5	41.8
	Subtle	29.7		3.9		19.5	
Imagery	Simple	56.9	11.8	5.5	12.5	68.3	13.5
	Complex	43.1		2.6		31.7	

^a All pair votes for ten poems in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Number equals 3,248, bulked attendance for ten periods.

^b All 1 + 2 votes for ten poems in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Percentages for critical ratios were derived by dividing votes for subdivision by 6,496, or total 1 + 2 votes for ten periods.

^c All 1 + 2 votes for ten poems in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Percentages for critical ratios were derived by dividing number of votes for a subdivision by number of votes for category of which it was a member. Number varies according to category as follows: Humor, 1,451; Didactic, 850; Romantic and Commonplace Subject Matter, 1,537; Nature, 824; Sound Effect, 1,311; Imagery, 523.

^d C. R. = difference divided by $.6745 \sqrt{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2}$.

^e C. R. = difference divided by $.6745 \sqrt{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 - 2(-1.00) \sigma_1 \sigma_2}$.

PROSE

Method 1. Choices were in favor of the *a* subdivision in thirteen of the sixteen pairs used in the prose study.

Method 2. Choices were consistently in favor of the *a* subdivision when pair votes were bulked in the same manner as that used in the poetry study. The results of this method can be seen in Table 4.

Method 3. For this, as for the poetry, two approaches were used. In both of these the decision was in favor of the *a* subdivision. It will be noted, however, if the actual percentages of choices are examined, as these appear in the third column of data in Table 4 that the distribution of preferences was badly skewed.

TABLE 4
DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR SUB-DIVISIONS OF CATEGORIES IN PROSE AS MEASURED BY CRITICAL RATIOS COMPUTED ON THREE BASES

Category	Subdivision	PAIR CHOICES		FIRST PLUS SECOND CHOICES		
		% of Category Choices ^a	C. R. ^b	% of Total Choices ^c	C. R. ^d	% of Choices within Category ^e
Humor	Obvious	73.9	30.0	56.2	24.6	76.8
	Subtle	26.1		17.0		23.2
Didactic	Story	76.6	34.7	7.7	6.0	77.6
	Straight	23.4		2.2		22.4
Subject Matter	Commonplace	59.1	10.2	5.0	3.6	64.2
	Romantic	40.9		2.8		35.8
Nature	Center of interest ..	74.3	30.7	5.2	1.7	56.5
	No center of interest	25.7		4.0		43.5

^a All pair votes of four selections in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Number equals 1,356 or four times 339, the day's attendance.

^b All 1 + 2 votes of four selections in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Percentages for critical ratios were obtained by dividing number of votes for subdivision by 678, or twice 339, the day's attendance.

^c All 1 + 2 votes of four selections in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Percentages for critical ratios were obtained by dividing number of votes for a subdivision by number of votes for category of which it was a member. Number varies according to category as follows: Humor, 496; Didactic, 67; Subject Matter, 53; Nature, 62.

^d C. R. = difference divided by $.6745 \sqrt{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2}$.

^e C. R. = difference divided by $.6745 \sqrt{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 - 2(-1.00) \sigma_1 \sigma_2}$.

The piling up of votes in the humor category tends to make differences between subdivisions in the two lower ranking categories only relatively significant. The critical ratios on these subdivisions in the last column of data are probably due to the fact that the treatment of each category as a unit tended to exaggerate percentage differences.

PUPIL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

Method 1. Choices in paired items were in favor of the *a* subdivision in ten of the sixteen pairs used.

Method 2. The decision was in favor of the *a* subdivision in three of the four categories used, but in one of these, nature with and without a center of interest, the difference was not significant. In one category, romantic and commonplace subject matter, the preference was for the romantic subject matter subdivision, but not decisively so. An examination of percentages of pair votes as these appear in the first column of Table 5 on page 54 will show the extent and direction of preferences in subdivisions.

Method 3. Choices, as measured by both approaches used in this method, followed very closely the direction indicated by the pair votes. In three categories the preference was for the *a* subdivision. In one category, romantic and commonplace subject matter, the romantic subject matter subdivision was much more definitely preferred than it was in the pair votes. The results of both approaches used under Method 3 appear in Table 5 on page 54.

RANKS FOR PREFERENCE OF SUBDIVISIONS IN POETRY, PROSE, AND THE QUESTIONNAIRE

POETRY

When percentages based on bulked votes for first and second choices for preference are examined, it is clear that there are marked differences in the extent of liking for the twelve subdivisions included in the study. In evaluating differences in preference, percentages, rather than the ranks based on these, should be considered, since the distances between ranks are somewhat variable. This can be seen if Table 6 is examined. Figure 1, which shows the apportionment of preference according to subdivisions, will perhaps assist in giving a general picture of this whole aspect of the study.

TABLE 5

DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR SUBDIVISIONS OF CATEGORIES IN PUPIL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE AS MEASURED BY CRITICAL RATIOS COMPUTED ON THREE BASES

Category	Subdivision	PAIR CHOICES		FIRST PLUS SECOND CHOICES		
		% of Category Choices ^a	C. R. ^a	% of Total Choices ^b	C. R. ^d	% of Choices within Category ^c
Humor	Obvious	59.4	10.8	21.4	9.3	68.8
	Subtle	40.6		9.7		31.2
Didactic	Story	84.6	54.0	11.4	10.0	81.8
	Straight	15.4		2.5		18.2
Subject Matter	Commonplace	45.4	5.2	9.9	7.3	34.1
	Romantic	54.6		19.0		65.9
Nature	Center of interest . .	53.3	3.7	13.9	1.5	53.5
	No center of interest	46.7		12.1		46.5

^a All pair votes of four items in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Number equals 1,420, or four times 355, the day's attendance.

^b All 1 + 2 votes of four items in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Percentages for critical ratios were derived by dividing number of votes for a subdivision by 710, or twice 355, the day's attendance.

^c All 1 + 2 votes of four items in each subdivision were added and each category treated as a single pair. Percentages for critical ratios were derived by dividing number of votes for a subdivision by number of votes for category of which it was a member. Number varies according to category as follows: Humor, 221; Didactic, 99; Romantic and Commonplace Subject Matter, 205; Nature, 185.

^d C. R. = difference divided by $.6745 \sqrt{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2}$.

^e C. R. = difference divided by $.6745 \sqrt{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 - 2(-1.00) \sigma_1 \sigma_2}$.

A comparison of the extremes of the distribution may be helpful in this case. If the percentages in the second column of Table 6 on page 55 are examined, it will be noted that almost 57 per cent of all choices for preference were given to poems in the four top-ranking subdivisions. It will be likewise noted that only 12 per cent of the choices for preference were given poems in the four least-liked subdivisions. The distance between these two percentages is so great

TABLE 6

PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR SUBDIVISIONS OF
CATEGORIES IN POETRY AS INDICATED BY RANKS BASED ON
PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL FIRST PLUS SECOND CHOICES

Subdivisions	CHOICES					
	Total Group N = 6496		Boys N = 3104		Girls N = 3392	
	Rank ^a	Per Cent ^b	Rank	Per Cent	Rank	Per Cent
Obvious Sound Effect	1	16.3	1	17.7	2	15.0
Commonplace Subject Matter	2	15.0	3	13.3	1	16.5
Obvious Humor	3	14.6	2	15.9	3	13.3
Story Didactic	4	10.9	5	11.5	4	10.4
Nature with Center of Interest	5	9.4	6	9.2	5	9.6
Romantic Subject Matter	6	8.7	4	11.7	8	5.9
Subtle Humor	7	7.8	7	7.5	6	8.0
Simple Imagery	8	5.5	8	4.3	7	6.5
Subtle Sound Effect	9	3.9	9	3.2	9	4.6
Nature without Center of Interest	10	3.3	10	2.5	10	4.0
Complex Imagery	11	2.6	12	1.3	11	3.7
Straight Didactic	12	2.2	11	1.9	12	2.4

^a Rank of 1 indicates best-liked subdivision.

^b Percentages for ranks for total were obtained by dividing the sum of first plus second choices for all ten poems in a subdivision by 6,496, or the total number of first plus second choices made in the ten periods. Percentages for boys and for girls were similarly obtained except that their choices in a subdivision and their total number of choices were used as bases.

that a true difference in the appeal of poems classified in these groupings must be assumed. Since one-third of the experimental material is classified in each of these sections, sheer chance, if preference were not in question, would have given 33.3 per cent of the votes to each grouping. If deviation in either direction from this purely hypothetical percentage can be considered as indicative, surely the 57 per cent for preference accorded the four top subdivisions should mean that these subdivisions contained poems that appeal to children. Similarly, the 12 per cent given the low-ranking subdivisions would suggest that these subdivisions were composed largely of poems that are definitely not attractive to young readers.

The ranking of individual poems classified in the subdivisions in

question bears out the conclusions suggested by the differences in percentage between the top and bottom third of the material. For instance, fifteen of the twenty best-liked poems belong in these four top-ranking subdivisions, and only one poem, so classified, falls into the bottom twenty. On the other hand, no poem classified under the four low-ranking subdivisions appears in the ranking for preference until the fifty-third rank is reached, a position that indicates, at best, indifference. Furthermore, a check of the twenty poems that fell to the bottom of the list for preference showed that twelve of these least-liked poems were classified in the four low-ranking subdivisions.

While all poems classified in any one subdivision are not by any means absolutely equal in appeal, it seems safe to assume that there are common elements in the poems classified in the top four subdivisions that make them better liked by children than the poems classified in the four least-liked subdivisions. There are, of course, the appeals suggested by the classifications. It seems clear that a majority of children respond positively to a definitely marked rhythm and to such sound effects as repetition and refrain. It seems equally clear that they are interested in poetry that presents material which is commonplace in the sense that it deals with persons and events well within the realm of their experience. The liking for obvious humor, ranking third, but in percentage almost equal in value to the commonplace, is likewise definite and easily explainable. The preference for the story didactic is due, in all probability, as much to the story form as to the ethical import, though there is evidence enough in the reasons given for liking by the children themselves that a moral is far from being resented if it is interestingly presented.

Above and beyond the appeals suggested by the titles given these best-liked subdivisions, it is highly probable that there are interest elements more or less common to all four of them though in varying degrees. As an analysis of individual poems definitely well liked and definitely not liked will be attempted in a later chapter, this portion of the discussion will be limited to an analysis of characteristics more or less common to much poetry classifiable under the definitions used to limit these four subdivisions. It will not be con-

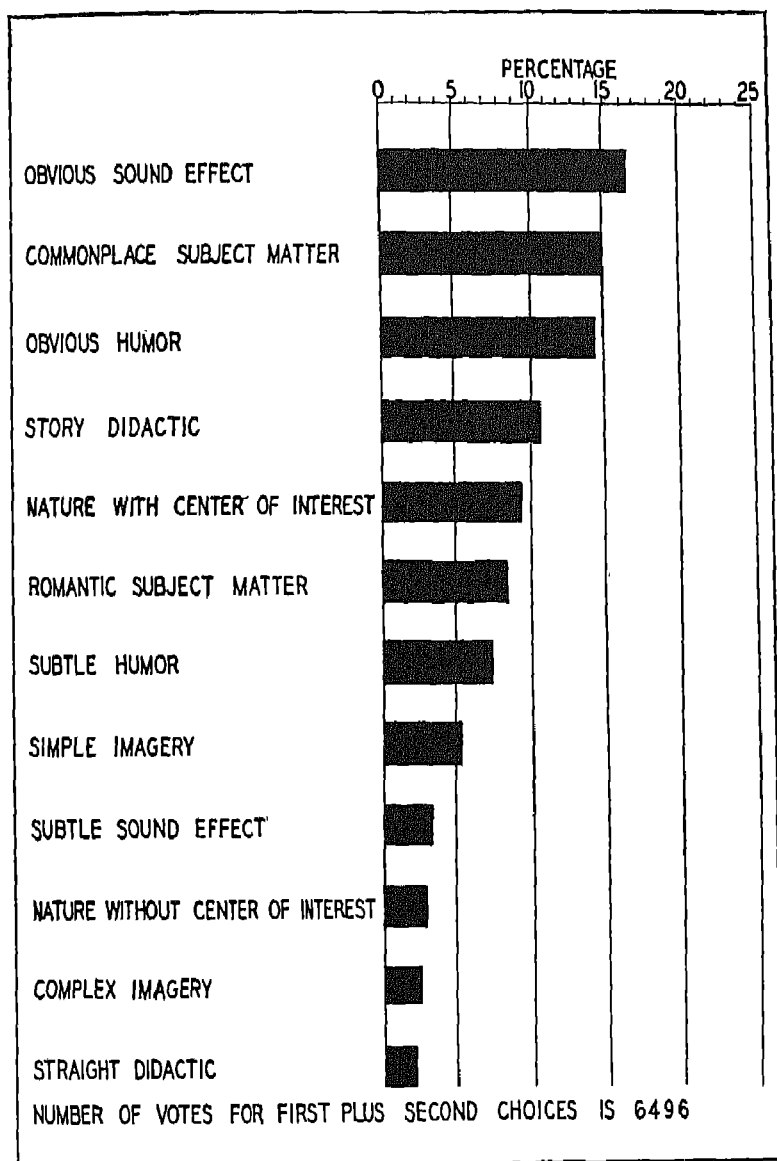


FIGURE I. Poetry Preferences of Total Group According to Subdivisions of Categories.

finer to the poetry included in the study, though this will be used as a point of reference.

Certain characteristics, common to all four top-ranking subdivisions, are as follows:

1. *Simplicity.* Much poetry that is classifiable under the definitions adopted for these subdivisions depends for its effect upon an almost immediate comprehension. The use of commonplace subject matter implies, usually, a simple vocabulary, few if any abstractions, and very modest demands on the imagination.

Obvious humor, similarly, can best be conveyed in ordinary language. Its effect depends frequently on the easily perceived, the grotesque or absurd, and its demand is often less for imagination than for simple recall of what is already a part of the reader's experience.

The story didactic is customarily almost oversimplified in both pattern and vocabulary. Its meaning is easily grasped as the contrast element is frequently employed and visualization rather than imagination is relied upon.

The case for simplicity is not so clear in poems classifiable under the definition used for obvious sound effect. Such poems seldom make excessive demands in the matter of vocabulary, but their demands on the imagination are frequently somewhat heavy. However, this may be in part compensated for by the stimulus given by the sound itself. The response is to a large extent physical. Such poems are apprehended even if not entirely comprehended, and the result is satisfactory to the child.

2. *Sharpness of Outline.* All four subdivisions imply sharpness of outline, concrete pictorial effects, and vivid detail. Little is implied and much stated. With the exception of poems classifiable as obvious sound effect, much poetry that lies within the definitions of these subdivisions could, without too serious a violation of its fundamental nature, be converted into prose, for it has few overtones. It is frequently verse rather than poetry, in the strict sense of that word, for the poetic techniques employed are often added embellishments rather than organic in nature. There are, of course, notable exceptions to this in the entire range of poetry, but they are few.

3. *Story Interest.* Poetry classifiable under the definitions used for these four subdivisions has commonly some degree of story interest. This is possibly less true of poems that rely largely upon obvious sound effect for their appeal, though even in these a thread of story is frequently employed. Certainly the poems classed under this subdivision that ranked in the top twenty in this experiment contained narrative interest. In the other three subdivisions, the story element is characteristically present.

Poems using commonplace subject matter are frequently anecdotal in nature.

Poetry that is obviously humorous frequently gets its effect by narrating absurd mishaps that involve a character or characters in comic misery.

The story didactic, as the designation implies, depends upon narrative interest to make palatable its moral.

4. *Action.* Poetry belonging to these subdivisions, with the possible exception of that designated as commonplace subject matter, is characterized by some form of action. This action is not necessarily adventurous in nature. It is frequently merely a kind of liveliness. As a quality it can be distinguished from story interest, though it is frequently allied with it. For instance, Wordsworth's *Michael* has story interest, but it can hardly be said to have action in this sense as its appeal is based upon the reaction of the characters to events rather than on the events themselves. Often it is a matter of tone. This liveliness is definitely characteristic of the well-liked poems in this experiment that were classified under sound effect. It is likewise characteristic of the top-ranking poems classified under commonplace subject matter.

It is, of course, recognized that any or all of these characteristics may be present in poems other than those classifiable into these four subdivisions. The last three, for instance, are often markedly present in poetry that treats such traditionally romantic figures as highwaymen and buccaneers. It seems desirable, nevertheless, to suggest interest elements that are present in poetry which is similar in nature to that included in the four well-liked subdivisions, as such a sketching of broad outlines suggests directions for later refinement of analyses.

When the four subdivisions that rank low for liking, Subtle Sound Effect, Nature without a Center of Interest, Complex Imagery, and Straight Didactic, are considered, it seems clear that they likewise have in common certain characteristics which may account for the relatively small number of votes they received for preference. The possession of these qualities does not by any means indicate that poems so classified are inferior as poetry. In fact, such qualities are present in poetry that ranks very high indeed with cultivated adult readers. It does mean, however, that such poetry is not fundamentally appealing to young readers. As certain fairly definite qualities are already suggested by the title of the subdivisions, only characteristics common to two or more of the subdivisions and not necessarily implied in the definitions of any of them, will be suggested. These are as follows:

1. *Comprehension Difficulty.* With the possible exception of the nature poems, the low-ranking subdivisions imply a kind of poetry that makes heavier demands upon the reader in terms of attention and comprehension than does the poetry in the more popular subdivision.

A poem that depends for its success upon the subtlety of its sound effects requires a discriminating reader. The average junior high school child is probably without either the ability or the training that would enable him to hear such poetry, in the proper sense of the word hear, and so cannot respond to its delicate sound pattern. The difficulty in this case is less a difficulty due to understanding, in the intellectual sense, than to the subtler type of comprehension that is involved in appreciation.

Poems that are classifiable according to the definition used for the subdivision called Complex Imagery raise similar problems in comprehension. A poem of this kind is often either a single elaborated image or a series of organically related images. If the image or images are not vividly realized, the poem is quite without meaning to the reader. Misunderstanding in such cases usually falls into one of two classifications: the image or images are not followed through, and so confusion results; the image or images are interpreted too literally and are thus reduced to grotesques. Both T. W. Sussams,¹

¹T. W. Sussams, "An Inquiry into the Spontaneous Responses of Children to Poetry," *Journal of Education*, May, 1933. Volume 65, pp. 274-276.

who experimented with children, and I. A. Richards,² who analyzed the responses to poetry of college students, have reported numerous instances of such misunderstandings.

With didactic poems, the difficulty is clearly related to the inability of children to deal with even simple abstractions. To perceive courage as it is displayed dramatically in a brave act is one thing; to understand courage as an abstract quality is quite another.

2. *Emotional Demands.* The emotional demands made by a large number of the poems classifiable under these four subdivisions are such that the experiences of everyday life, especially the life of the child, do not prepare for, indeed almost prepare against. They ask sensitive awareness and the ability to respond emotionally to concepts. Pure nature poems frequently imply not only a degree of introspection unusual in children, but require something that approaches a religious attitude toward nature as an abstraction.

Imagery not uncommonly asks that the reader perceive similarity in dissimilarity and respond to it in this unfamiliar guise. Such a response demands not only fresh orientation in intellectual approach but in emotional approach as well.

3. *Static Effect.* All poems classifiable under the definitions used for these four subdivisions tend to be somewhat static in effect. In them the life of thought and feeling rather than the life of action is portrayed. Their appeal is to the meditative reader, the individual more interested in the *why* than the *what* in life, and more attracted by the savor of life than by its bustling activity. Consequently it is not surprising that such poems should appeal only faintly to children.

PROSE

When preferences for subdivisions of the prose study are evaluated, it is essential that percentages rather than rank be considered. This is necessary, because the extreme piling up of votes in the two well-liked subdivisions tends to obscure difference of appeal in the moderately-liked subdivisions. Such a top-heavy distribution tends to make rank position not truly indicative, since the distances between the first three ranks, in terms of percentages, are large, while the distances

² I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*.

between the remaining five ranks are small. This can be seen if Table 7 is examined.

TABLE 7
PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR SUBDIVISIONS OF
CATEGORIES IN PROSE AS INDICATED BY RANKS BASED ON
PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL FIRST PLUS SECOND CHOICES

Subdivision	CHOICES					
	Total Group N = 678		Boys N = 332		Girls N = 346	
	Rank ^a	Per Cent ^b	Rank	Per Cent	Rank	Per Cent
Obvious Humor	1	56.2	1	59.0	1	53.5
Subtle Humor	2	17.0	2	12.7	2	21.1
Story Didactic	3	7.7	5	4.5	3	10.7
Nature with Center of Interest	4	5.2	3	7.2	5.5	3.2
Commonplace Subject Matter	5	5.0	4	6.9	5.5	3.2
Nature without Center of Interest	6	4.0	8	2.7	4	5.2
Romantic Subject Matter	7	2.8	7	3.3	7	2.3
Straight Didactic	8	2.2	6	3.6	8	0.9

^a Rank of 1 indicates best-liked subdivision.

^b Percentages for ranks for total were obtained by dividing the sum of first plus second choices for all four selections in a subdivision by the 678, or twice 339, the day's attendance. Percentages for boys and girls were similarly obtained.

If the percentages in the second column of data are examined, it will be seen that obvious humor received over 56 per cent of all votes. Subtle humor, though a poor second, is markedly preferred to the next ranking subdivision, story didactic. Nature with a center of interest and commonplace subject matter are approximately equal in interest. Nature without a center of interest lags somewhat behind these, and romantic subject matter and straight didactic were clearly little liked by the children who participated in this portion of the experiment.

Since the two top-ranking subdivisions received slightly more than 73 per cent of all preferences, it is hazardous to draw any conclusions as to the differences between the degree of liking for the remaining subdivisions. With less than 27 per cent of the choices to be divided among the remaining six subdivisions, it is clear that sharp distinctions cannot be made. What the results would have been had the

disturbing factor of humor been eliminated from the study, can be a matter only for conjecture. It is probably safe to say that the story didactic was better liked than the subdivisions that ranked below it if its percentage is considered in relation to the 27 per cent of the choices that were apportioned among the less popular subdivisions. Since it received more than one-third of all votes not cast for humor, it appears that the story didactic represents a fairly well-liked subject matter appeal. What is clear beyond a shadow of a doubt is that the children who participated in this study liked humor, whether obvious or subtle, but preferably obvious.

In the prose, as in the poetry, undoubtedly elements other than those suggested by the classification entered in, though these had been held to a minimum. Certain of these were inevitable, since it is impossible in prose, as in poetry, to isolate a single appeal. As certain of these are undoubtedly common to much prose used at the junior high school level, it should be profitable to suggest briefly the elements which were present in the best-liked and the least-liked subdivisions.

In the best-liked subdivisions there were present—besides humor—story interest, familiar and appealing subject matter, and lively action. These characteristics are undoubtedly present in much humorous prose material and contribute to its popularity.

In the least-liked subdivision, the straight didactic, there was no story interest and consequently no action. Like most material of its type, it demanded an interest in discussion of personal or social problems without dramatization of these. Its unpopularity cannot be accounted for on grounds of difficulty, as it involved no difficulty other than the natural one inherent in dealing with ideas rather than events. The vocabulary was as simple as that used in the top-ranking subdivision and the sentence patterns were highly comparable. The problems discussed were easily within the comprehension and experience level of the children included in the study. With these facts in mind, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that children are not interested in ideas as such and that they react negatively to the didactic in literature unless it comes attractively garnished.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

When the preferences for the subdivisions in the questionnaire are examined, two facts emerge: the ranking of subdivisions does not closely parallel the ranking in either poetry or prose, and choices are rather widely scattered. While the intervals between ranks are by no means absolutely equal, there is a tendency toward a fairly steady decline in percentage for preference from the most preferred to the least preferred subdivision until the straight didactic is reached. Between it and the subdivision that ranks above it, there is a fairly definite gap.

TABLE 8
PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR SUBDIVISIONS OF
CATEGORIES IN PUPIL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE AS INDICATED
BY RANKS BASED ON PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL FIRST PLUS
SECOND CHOICES

Subdivision	CHOICES					
	Total Group N = 710		Boys N = 338		Girls N = 372	
	Rank ^a	Per Cent ^b	Rank	Per Cent	Rank	Per Cent
Obvious Humor	1	21.4	1	25.1	2	18.0
Romantic Subject Matter	2	19.0	2	17.5	1	20.4
Nature with Center of Interest	3	13.9	4	12.4	3	15.3
Nature without Center of Interest	4	12.1	6	9.5	4	14.5
Story Didactic	5	11.4	3	14.5	7	8.6
Commonplace Subject Matter	6	9.9	7	7.4	5	12.1
Subtle Humor	7	9.7	5	10.6	6	8.9
Straight Didactic	8	2.5	8	3.0	8	2.2

^a Rank of 1 indicates best liked subdivision.

^b Percentages for ranks for total were obtained by dividing sum of first plus second choices for grouped items of subdivision by 710, or twice 355, the day's attendance. Percentages for boys and girls were similarly obtained. Number of choices were as follows: for total, 710; for boys, 338; for girls, 372.

An inspection of Table 8, given above, will show that obvious humor is the best-liked subdivision, with romantic subject matter following close behind. It will show, likewise, that the straight didactic is the

least-liked subdivision and subtle humor the next least liked. The distance between these two, in terms of percentage, is, however, fairly great. There is actually little difference between the preference for subtle humor and for the commonplace, the next-ranking subdivision. There is a real difference between the preference for the straight didactic and either subtle humor or the commonplace.

When a comparison is made between the two top-ranking subdivisions and the two low-ranking subdivisions, it seems clear that there are real differences in the extent of preference for the appeals present in these two groupings. The two best-liked subdivisions received a combined percentage of 40.4 per cent of all expressed preferences; the two least-liked subdivisions received only 12.2 per cent of such preferences.

If the appeals present in these two groupings are examined, certain differences appear that account for the rankings accorded them. A degree of caution must be observed, however, in interpreting these, as there is an element of contradiction in the findings which is, no doubt, due primarily to the nature of the items in the questionnaire and secondarily to the method employed in getting choices on subdivisions. It will be recalled that choices on subdivisions were made from grouped items that were similarly classified. For instance, all items that were supposed to measure interest in the romantic were grouped together. Had the items not been so grouped but had they appeared separately so that choices could be made on items rather than on groups, as was done in the poetry and in the prose, the results might have been more truly indicative. Because of this grouping of items, it is highly possible that choices were influenced by the fact that certain groups contained items that were definitely liked or definitely not liked. For instance, pair votes on the two top-ranking subdivisions indicate that there was more division of opinion than appears in the ranking of these subdivisions. In both of the categories to which these subdivisions belonged, choices were equally divided between the pairs, though the bulked percentages on pairs went in the same direction as the ranking of the subdivisions. For this reason pair votes must be considered in evaluating the ranking of subdivisions.

Obvious humor, the best-liked subdivision, was preferred for the

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

	Total	Per Cent	
		Boys	Girls
1. I prefer movies			
a. that are very funny because they show people having all sorts of ridiculous things happen to them.	71.0	76.3	66.1
b. that are amusing and make me smile but at which I do not laugh.	29.0	23.7	33.9
2. I prefer stories that			
a. are full of jokes and tell of the funny tricks people play on each other.	43.9	50.9	37.6
b. are amusing rather than funny.	56.1	49.1	62.4
3. I prefer to hear			
a. a good joke that makes me laugh aloud.	44.5	50.3	39.2
b. cleverly told stories that are witty and make me smile.	55.5	49.7	60.8
4. I prefer to look at			
a. the funny papers.	78.3	80.5	76.3
b. cartoons in papers and magazines.	21.7	19.5	23.7
5. I prefer to read about			
a. fine, brave men and women who have done worthwhile things.	78.3	86.4	71.0
b. how people should behave if they want to live good, useful lives.	21.7	13.6	29.0
6. I prefer to listen to			
a. a story about boys and girls like myself who have done things that have made people honor and respect them.	80.6	85.8	75.8
b. a talk on good behavior so that I will know how I should behave.	19.4	14.2	24.2
7. I prefer to listen to			
a. a story that teaches a good lesson.	86.8	86.4	87.1
b. a good sermon.	13.2	13.6	12.9
8. At a movie I prefer			
a. a picture that teaches patriotism by showing some great event in our history.	92.7	90.6	94.6
b. a patriotic speech by some statesman.	7.3	9.4	5.4
9. I prefer movies about			
a. people who work hard on farms, at mills, or in factories and stores, men and women whose lives are rather like the lives of many people I know.	22.8	11.8	32.8
b. explorers or adventurers, men who lead dangerous and exciting lives.	77.2	88.2	67.2

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS (Continued)

		Per Cent		
		Total	Boys	Girls
10.	I prefer movies about			
	a. ordinary men and women, people who live in the kind of houses that you see everywhere.....	61.4	77.5	46.8
	b. beautifully dressed women and handsome men, the kind of people who live in fine houses and drive big cars.	38.6	22.5	53.2
11.	I prefer news reels about			
	a. places near by or places where I have been. ...	37.5	39.6	35.5
	b. far-away places like China or India.	62.5	60.4	64.5
12.	I prefer to read stories about			
	a. boys and girls like myself who do the things my friends and I enjoy doing.	59.7	57.4	61.8
	b. boys and girls of distant countries whose lives are very different from mine.	40.3	42.6	38.2
13.	I prefer travel pictures that show			
	a. how people live, how they work, and how they amuse themselves.	40.3	42.0	38.7
	b. beautiful scenes, mountains, forests, or the sea.	59.7	58.0	61.3
14.	I prefer to read stories that			
	a. are about people and have a great deal of conversation in them.	74.6	68.0	80.6
	b. have many beautiful descriptions of scenery in them.	25.4	32.0	19.4
15.	If I were to have a picture for my room, I should prefer			
	a. one of a person or animal.	33.2	43.8	23.7
	b. one of a beautiful scene, the mountains, the sea, or a forest.	66.8	56.2	76.3
16.	If I had a kodak, I should prefer to take pictures of			
	a. my friends and pets.	65.1	59.2	70.4
	b. beautiful scenery.	34.9	40.8	29.6

quality indicated by the title given it. It is noteworthy, however, that the two items that were definitely preferred when they were presented as members of paired items, were ones that dealt with amusements that are part of the experience background of most children. One of these concerned the reading of funny papers; the other dealt with the type of comic moving picture that portrays clowning and boisterous action.

If the questionnaire items are referred to, as they appear above in tabular form, the present discussion can be more easily followed.

In this, pairs are grouped together according to the category to which they belong and the items are arranged throughout in the *a* and *b* sequence. This form is used in order to simplify comparisons of percentages of pair votes within subdivisions. In the actual questionnaire the categories were purposely not so grouped and the *a* and *b* items were reversed in order from pair to pair. The choices for best and next best liked, were made from the grouped *a* and grouped *b* items of each category. The pair form is presented, however, as this seems most useful for reference purposes.

The two preferred items in the second ranking subdivision, the romantic, depend for their appeal upon interest in the remote and the adventurous. The nature of this appeal can be more easily perceived if these items, *b* in pair 9 and *b* in pair 11, are read. The two items in this subdivision that were not preferred to the commonplace when they appeared in the pair situation are *b* in pair 10 and *b* in pair 12. If these items are read it will be seen that very probably certain obscuring elements entered into the children's reactions to them. The item that dealt with the lives of the wealthy, though it aimed at getting a reaction to a familiar form of the exotic, probably fell short of its purpose because it called to mind moving pictures that were too sophisticated to appeal to children. The item concerning stories of children of distant lands may have been affected by two factors: the common use in schools of instructional material that presents similar stories in a not too interesting fashion; the fact that it was paired with an item that suggested fiction of the type that is particularly appealing to children.

Rather clearly, two common aspects of the romantic appear here as in the poetry and the prose, the adventurous and the exotic. The first of these is definitely liked in any type of material; the second is liked, apparently, only when it is of a certain type and when visually portrayed.

The two low-ranking subdivisions, the straight didactic and subtle humor, are apparently lacking in interest appeals that are operative with children. It is clearly so with the straight didactic, as in this the pair votes support the ranking given the subdivision on the basis of choices for preference; it is less clearly so in the case of subtle

humor. The reasons for the lack of decisiveness in this latter subdivision have already been suggested in the discussion of the ranking of obvious humor and in the references throughout to the difficulties inherent in discovering humor preferences by means of questionnaire items.

If the percentage of choice given the *b* items in pairs 5, 6, 7, and 8 are checked, it will be seen that interest in the activities suggested by these items was very faint indeed. As the interest in patriotic speeches was least and in sermons next least, it may be assumed that the tendency toward the use of abstractions in both these, plus the remoteness from children's natural interests, account for the small number of choices they received. The other two items, which dealt with the application of principles of conduct to the individual's own life, though not by any means popular, were appreciably better liked than those previously discussed. The best liked of these, the one dealing with talks on correct deportment, received slightly more than 21 per cent of the pair votes. As all four items in this subdivision are related to experiences that are fairly common even to children of junior high school age, it can be assumed that a very large majority of children do not react favorably to direct instruction.

The low rank of the subtle humor subdivision, like the high rank of the obvious humor subdivision, must be interpreted in the light of the pair votes. This is essential, since the four paired items that represented the humor category, though unequal in all other respects, were equal in actual pair choices. It is highly probable, therefore, that the small number of choices for preference given this subdivision may be accounted for by the inclusion in the grouping of the two less-liked items. One of these items refers to amusing moving pictures; the other to interest in cartoons. It is highly probable that the word amusing has quite other connotations to a child than it has to an adult. Furthermore, an amusing comedy is likely to be sophisticated as well as subtle. The lack of interest in cartoons is entirely understandable, since an appreciation of these usually implies a knowledge of political affairs or social life. It is surprising that even 21 per cent of the children chose cartoons in preference to funny papers when these were paired.

Despite the obvious weaknesses in the whole humor category in the questionnaire, it seems to indicate that children have a marked preference for the easily perceived type of humor of the rudimentary kind to be found in the comic strip or in the moving picture that depends for its effect on the absurd mishaps of its characters.

COMPARISON OF RANKS OF SUBDIVISIONS IN POETRY, PROSE, AND THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Some interesting similarities and dissimilarities appear when the rankings of comparable subdivisions in poetry, prose, and the questionnaire are examined. Strictly speaking, the percentages, and consequently the ranks, of the subdivisions in poetry cannot be compared to the percentages in the other two types of material as the poetry contained four subdivisions that could not be paralleled in the prose and the questionnaire. As the four subdivisions that are not comparable received slightly over 28 per cent of the choices, it is obvious that the percentages of the eight remaining subdivisions would be affected. It seems worth while, nevertheless, to suggest points of agreement and disagreement and possible explanations of these.

In all three types of material the straight didactic is least liked of all the subdivisions. While a variety of reasons undoubtedly operates in this, it seems clear that the reaction of children to the straight didactic, regardless of its form, is apathetic if not negative.

The agreement on the ranking of obvious humor is remarkably close in all three types. In both prose and the questionnaire it ranks first. In poetry it ranks third. If it is considered that in poetry twelve subdivisions rather than eight are included, and in actual percentage obvious humor is within four-tenths of one per cent of the second ranking subdivision, it will be seen that it comes very close indeed to the top for preference.

There is fair agreement on the ranking of both the story didactic and nature with a center of interest. The story didactic, which ranks fourth in poetry, third in prose, and fifth in the questionnaire, may be said to be fairly well liked in all three types of material. Its relatively greater percentage for preference in poetry is due, no doubt, to the greater attractiveness of the poems classified under this sub-

division than the material similarly classified in the prose and the questionnaire.

Nature with a center of interest, which ranks fifth in poetry, fourth in prose, and third in the questionnaire, apparently represents a moderately but consistently liked appeal in subject matter. The greater degree of preference it receives in the questionnaire is due, no doubt, to the nature of the items used. A check of the *a* items in this subdivision, as they appear in the tabular form of the questionnaire on pages 66 and 67, will be more helpful than a discussion of them.

The similarity of degree of preference for nature with a center of interest in all three types suggests that children tend to think of nature as a pleasing background rather than as intrinsically interesting.

There is real disagreement in the extent of preference accorded the romantic, the commonplace, and subtle humor in the three types of material. The romantic, which ranks second in the questionnaire, falls to the sixth rank in poetry, and to the seventh in prose. As the sixth rank in poetry represents only a very moderate degree of liking and the seventh position in prose represents something that approximates indifference, it is clear that elements are present in the questionnaire items that are not present in the other materials. These elements are related, no doubt, to the fact that the well-liked items concern interest in moving pictures that portray the remote, the strange, and the adventurous. As has been suggested elsewhere, comprehension difficulties, which no doubt were operative in the poetry and to a lesser extent in the prose, do not enter into an appreciation of the moving picture.

The variation in the ranking of the commonplace from second in poetry to fifth in prose and sixth in the questionnaire may be due to several factors. One of these is that the poetry classified as commonplace contained the top-ranking poem, a poem liked to a most unusual extent, as well as two or three other well-liked poems. The preferences expressed for these individual poems naturally increased the percentage for the whole subdivision. Another factor, the skewed distribution in the prose, tended to obscure differences in all but the top-ranking subdivisions. There is little doubt, moreover, that as a whole the commonplace selections in prose were intrinsically less in-

teresting than the poems classified as commonplace. The relatively low rank given the commonplace in the questionnaire was due to the fact that three of the four items used in this subdivision dealt with interest in moving pictures, and, as a whole, the moving picture, except in films beyond a child's level of appreciation, has not yet succeeded in making the commonplace as interesting as the romantic.

The disagreement on the ranking of subtle humor seems, like the disagreement on the romantic, to be due in a large part to matters of definition and form. As for purposes of this study subtle humor was defined as the whimsical, satirical, or ironical, the stories written for the prose study were patterned on these definitions. All four were sufficiently well liked to receive 17 per cent of the choices. As a result, the subtle humor subdivision, which ranks seventh in poetry and seventh in the questionnaire, rises to second place in the prose study. If percentages are considered, it will be seen that in poetry this subdivision received slightly fewer votes than might be considered to be its share had preferences for the subdivisions been equal; in the questionnaire it received definitely fewer votes, but in the prose study it received choices for preference well in excess of its assumed expectations in terms of percentage. These hypothetical percentages to which actual percentages are compared are obtained by dividing 100 per cent by the number of subdivisions in the study. For poetry, the hypothetical percentage would be 8.3 per cent as twelve subdivisions are involved; in the prose study and in the questionnaire it would be 12.5 per cent.

The greater popularity of subtle humor in the prose was due very largely to the fact that the prose offered fewer comprehension problems. As the material used was synthetic, it was possible to make all subdivisions approximately equal in difficulty. Poetry that is whimsical, ironical, or satirical is likely to be brief, condensed, and allusive. This was not the case with the prose. Moreover, child or animal characters were used for the stories in this subdivision of the prose study. The use of such material tended, obviously, to bring the stories close to the children's level of experience. In the questionnaire, the same factors operated against preference as operated in the poetry, but to an even greater extent.

CHAPTER VIII

Sex Differences in Preferences in Poetry, Prose, and the Questionnaire

THE problem of sex differences in preferences is one that must be considered in every phase of this study. Though the primary purpose of the investigation was not the discovery of such differences, they are too significant at the junior high school level to be safely ignored. Since the chief emphasis in the study is on poetry, the differences between the preferences of boys and girls in this type of material have been analyzed with a fair degree of thoroughness and are presented in some detail. Sex differences as they appeared in choices made in the prose study and the questionnaire have been presented in a much more general fashion.

SEX DIFFERENCES IN POETRY PREFERENCES

While the boys and girls who participated in the experiment agreed sufficiently to yield an r_p of $.81 \pm .02$ on the rankings of the 120 poems used, there were differences in their choices in kinds of poetry, and wide differences in their rankings of individual poems.

Sex differences in poetry preferences were evaluated as follows:

1. A comparison of rank positions of subdivisions for best liked and least liked to discover general trends in preference.
2. An analysis of individual poems when rankings for these differed widely for boys and girls.
3. A correlation of boys' and girls' rankings for least-liked poems.
4. A consideration of ranking of individual poems for least-liked in relation to their ranking for preference, when such poems showed a marked sex difference.
5. An evaluation of differences as indicated by critical ratios based on percentages of first and second choices for boys and girls.

If Table 6 on page 55 is examined, sex differences, as those appear in ranking of subdivisions, can be seen. Briefly summarized, these are as follows:

1. Poems in the obvious sound effect subdivision, though well-liked by the girls, were even better liked by the boys.
2. Poems in the commonplace subject matter subdivision were definitely better liked by the girls than by the boys.
3. Poems classified as romantic were clearly more popular with the boys than with the girls.
4. Poems classified in both the *a* and *b* subdivisions of the imagery category were almost twice as popular with the girls as with the boys.

When percentages for least liked are examined, as these appear in Table 6, it will be noted that they tend to be inversely related to percentages for best liked. For instance, obvious sound effect, which was better liked by the boys than by the girls, likewise received fewer votes from them for least liked, and complex imagery, which ranked higher for preference with the girls than with the boys, received fewer votes for least liked from the girls. This is not entirely consistent, however.

An analysis of individual poems in which there was considerable sex difference in preference will perhaps be more helpful in suggesting reasons for choices than a consideration of rankings of subdivisions. However, as it is clearly impracticable to attempt a consideration of all poems in which there was some difference in the rankings of boys and girls, Table 9 on pages 75 to 78 is included, so that readers who are interested may make what comparisons they wish. In Table 9 appear the titles of all 120 poems used in the experiment. Authors and publishers are listed in the Appendix so that these may be referred to for unfamiliar material. In several instances the complete poem was not used, since stanzas could be eliminated without seriously altering the effect of the poem. In a very few instances the titles were changed for reasons that will suggest themselves. All alterations of this sort are indicated in the Appendix.

In Table 9 all poems that had a rank difference of more than ten between boys and girls are marked with an asterisk; all poems that

TABLE 9

SEX DIFFERENCES IN POETRY CHOICES AS INDICATED BY RANKINGS FOR
BEST LIKED AND LEAST LIKED OF 120 POEMS

Cate- gory ^a	Title of Poem ^d	TOTAL GROUP ^a		RANK FOR BEST LIKED		RANK FOR LEAST LIKED	
		Rank for Best Liked ^a	Rank for Least Liked ^b	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
S.a	Little Lost Pup	1	120	3	1	117	120
SE.a	Simon Legree	2	79	1	5	112	49
H.b	Epitaph on a Politician	3	88	5	3	82.5	91
SE.a	Broom	4	103	4	6	110	89
D.a	Those Two Boys	5	119	7	4	119.5	118
S.a	I've Got a Dog	6	118	11	2	118	119
H.a	Wine and Water	7	114.5	9	7	107	109.5
N.a	Horse	8	104	6	13	114.5	83
S.a	The Storekeeper	9	106	8	10	102	98.5
S.b†	Ballad of John Silver	10	89.5	2	31	119.5	53.5
H.a	The Big Baboon	11	101	10	15.5	104	87.5
H.b*	A Terrible Enfant	12	94.5	23	8	70	109.5
D.a	Out of Work	13	106	13	14	105.5	95
H.a	The Horrible Cow	14	54.5	14	19	71	34.5
H.a	The Ambitious Haddock	15	92	15	22	111	66.5
SE.a†	Stranger	16	63.5	38	9	51	73
I.a†	Autumn	17	71	32	11	59	86
H.a†	The Buffalo	18	80	12	40.5	86	68.5

^a Rank is based on percentage of first plus second choices obtained by poem in day on which it was presented. Poems are ranked in order of preference.

^b Rank is based on percentage of first plus second choices for least liked obtained by poem in day on which it was presented. Poems are ranked in order of least liked.

^c Number varies with attendance for ten experimental periods. Range is: Total group, 292-342; boys 138-167; girls 154-177. Average is: Total group, 324; boys 155; girls 169.

^d Titles, authors and publishers are listed in the Appendix.

^e Categories are indicated by initials; subdivisions by *a* and *b*. See definitions on pages 16 and 17.

I Imagery	N Nature	SE Sound Effect
a. Simple	a. With Center of Interest	a. Obvious
b. Complex	b. Without Center of Interest	b. Subtle
	S Poetry of the Commonplace	
D Didactic	and Romantic	H Humor
a. Story Didactic	a. Commonplace	a. Obvious
b. Straight Didactic	b. Romantic	b. Subtle

* Rank difference between boys' and girls' choices is greater than 10.

† Placement in the upper thirty poems for either boys or girls with rank difference greater than 20.

TABLE 9 (Continued)

Category*	Title of Poem ^d	TOTAL GROUP ^e		RANK FOR BEST LIKED		RANK FOR LEAST LIKED	
		Rank for Best Liked ^a	Rank for Least Liked ^b	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
SE.a	Jazz Fantasia	19	20	22	17	32	15.5
SE.a	Where Do the Gypsies Come From?	20	81.5	18	23.5	92.5	65
S.a†	Scotty Bill	21	101	16	40.5	108.5	79.5
D.a†	Caliban in the Coal Mines	22	96	17	35.5	84	98.5
N.a	Four Little Foxes	23	108	24.5	28	100	105
H.b*	The Family Fool	24	67	21	35.5	68	57
S.a†	Little Homes	25	117	44	15.5	114.5	117
S.b†	Spanish Waters	26	113	20	42	113	102
H.a†	The Gingham Umbrella	27	77	52.5	12	56	96.5
D.a	Hem and Haw	28.5	59.5	30.5	29.5	72	42
N.a	The Old Pasture	28.5	116	29	32	105.5	115
D.a*	Lucinda Matlock	30	70	36	21	82.5	33.5
H.a*	The Yak	31	75.5	34.5	23.5	79	68.5
SE.a*	Cavalier	32	94.5	26	44	108.5	75
SE.a†	Boots	33	12	24.5	54	26	8
S.b†	Spanish Johnny	34	106	27	51.5	116	83
SE.a*	Tarantella	35	61.5	41	25	62	56
I.a*	Tartary	36	75.5	40	27	77	70.5
S.b†	A Wanderer's Song	37	83	28	51.5	80	83
N.a	Summer Evening	38	111	34.5	33	92.5	114
SE.a*	Jumping River Dances	39	52.5	33	44	57.5	40.5
S.a	White Christmas	40	97	39	37	97.5	91
SE.a*	John Brown	41.5	46	30.5	59	73	27
H.a*	The Shark and the Flying Fish	41.5	86	48	29.5	77	93.5
S.b†	A Tarry Buccaneer	43	58	19	86.5	89.5	33
SE.b	West Wind	44.5	73.5	46	39	55	100.5
H.a*	A Centipede Was Happy Quite	44.5	51	37	51.5	50	46
S.a†	An Old Woman of the Roads	46	98	75.5	18	81	106.5
H.b*	I'm Nobody	47	30	52.5	34	36	32
S.a†	Old Susan	48	81.5	88	20	85	75
D.a	Facts	49	72	47	51.5	69	70.5
N.a†	Three Cherry Trees	50	93	69	26	60.5	116
N.a	The Worm	51	111	50	48	100	111
D.a*	Mary's Son	52	89.5	65	38	89.5	87.5
N.b	Blessing on the Woods	53.5	86	51	60	89.5	79.5
S.a	Blessing on Little Boys	53.5	101	58	48	87	103
N.b*	In Springtime	55	48	61.5	44	24	93.5
S.b	A Vagabond Song	56	84	42	75	96	66.5
H.a*	The Chimpanzee	57	49	45	73.5	46	47.5

SEX DIFFERENCES

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TABLE 9 (Continued)

Category ^a	Title of Poem ^d	TOTAL GROUP ^c		RANK FOR BEST LIKED		RANK FOR LEAST LIKED	
		Rank for Best Liked ^a	Rank for Least Liked ^b	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
I.a*	Poem of Praise	58	59.5	66.5	48	57.5	53.5
S.b	Song of Wandering Aengus	59	56	60	58	60.5	45
N.a*	The Rabbit	60	86	55	69.5	97.5	75
I.b*	The Princess	61	32	91	46	19.5	60.5
N.a*	When the Year Grows Old	62	114.5	79	55	103	112.5
I.b*	Frost Tonight	63	63.5	72	57	52	72
S.b*	Dead Men Tell No Tales	64	45	49	86.5	66	28
SE.b*	Song of Shadows	65	23	56	72	17	30
SE.b	Velvet Shoes	66	37	68	63	19.5	77.5
N.a*	A Passing Glimpse	67	111	97	56	95	112.5
I.a	In Praise of Apple Trees	68.5	78	64	69.5	64	91
D.a*	The Man He Killed	68.5	50	43	112	77	29
I.b*	The Willow	70	43	75.5	62	29.5	62.5
I.a	The Pear Tree	71	57	70	66	74.5	38
S.a*	Marble Top	72	99	57	85	89.5	100.5
N.b*	Snow Toward Evening	73	40	83	61	38	43
SE.b*	Groundswell	74	26	54	94	42	20
D.b	Laugh and Be Merry	75	91	73.5	65	67	106.5
I.a*	Nature's Friend	76	109	66.5	79.5	100	108
N.a*	The Cow in Apple Time	77	65.5	61.5	90	94	40.5
N.b*	All That's Past	78	41	78	67	39	44
N.b*	Running Water	79.5	73.5	63	93	65	83
SE.b*	The Shell	79.5	68	89.5	69.5	43.5	96.5
SE.b	Fog Bell	81	42	77	76.5	53	31
I.b*	Joy and Pleasure	82	69	101	64	43.5	104
I.a	Grantchester	83	52.5	83	76.5	41	58
SE.b*	Eve	84.5	24	96	69.5	7	51
D.b*	The Unpardonable Sin	84.5	10	59	102	37	4
D.b	Prayer	86	54.5	83	78	45	60.5
D.b	Leisure	87.5	33	86	82	21.5	62.5
I.b	The Mystery	87.5	11	86	82	11	13
SE.b*	Scythe Song	89.5	19	106	73.5	14	25
I.a	Glimpse in Autumn	89.5	44	80.5	86.5	33	53.5
N.b*	The Holly	91	35	96	82	29.5	50
SE.b*	Chill of Eve	92	36	106	79.5	23	64
N.b*	The Islands	93	28	80.5	95	40	26
I.b	Spring Goeth All in White	94	47	92	89	54	36
D.b*	Do You Fear the Wind?	96	22	73.5	105.5	31	18
D.a*	Forgiveness	96	27	86	97.5	48.5	22

TABLE 9 (Continued)

Category ^c	Title of Poem ^d	TOTAL GROUP ^a		RANK FOR BEST LIKED		RANK FOR LEAST LIKED	
		Rank for Best Liked ^a	Rank for Least Liked ^b	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
H.b*	On the Vanity of Earthly Greatness	96	38.5	71	108.5	74.5	24
I.a*	City Trees	98	65.5	106	86.5	48.5	83
S.b*	Dream Pedlary	99	31	103	91.5	34	34.5
D.b*	Illumination	100	17	110	91.5	21.5	17
D.a	Blades of Grass	101	34	93	99	35	39
D.b*	Brotherhood	102	29	89.5	108.5	63	23
N.b*	Autumn Chant	103	61.5	110	96	47	77.5
S.b	Of Falcons	104	15	101	100	25	12
D.b	Cant	105.5	16	101	102	13	20
H.b	The Unexplorer	105.5	21	106	97.5	27	20
D.b	The Leaden-Eyed	107	2	98.5	104	10	1
I.b	Song	108	18	106	102	4	37
N.b	Song for Snow	109	25	98.5	107	12	47.5
H.b	The Wayfarer	110	7	115	105.5	18	3
SE.b	All Day I Hear	111	5	110	110	6	7
H.b	Thrushes	112.5	9	115	112	9	9
H.b*	A Little Madness in the Spring	112.5	1	96	119	1	2
N.b	Nothing Gold Can Stay	114	8	118.5	112	8	10
I.b	The Wakers	115	38.5	112.5	115.5	28	59
I.b	A Cemetery	116	3	115	115.5	2	5
I.b	Fog	118	14	118.5	115.5	15.5	15.5
D.b	For Mercy, Courage, Kindness, Mirth	118	13	118.5	115.5	15.5	14
I.a	Eel Grass	118	6	112.5	119	3	11
H.b	In Neglect	120	4	118.5	119	5	6

appeared in the upper thirty ranks for either boys or girls and had rank differences of more than twenty are marked with a dagger. As rankings for least liked are also included, these may be considered in relation to ranking for least liked.

If Table 9 on the preceding pages is examined, it will be seen that 66 of the 120 poems used had rank differences of more than ten between the rankings of boys and girls. Of these, possibly 44 can be considered as indicative, as these were ranked above 60 by either boys or girls. Sixty is here used as merely an arbitrary lower limit for definite preference. It seems justified, however, since it represents

the upper half of the material. Poems that fell below 60 had so few votes for preference that the inclusion of them in material used to determine sex differences seems merely to cloud the issue. For instance, *Snow Toward Evening*, which ranks 61 with the girls, received only 6.3 per cent of their votes on the day on which it was presented.

When the poems that show wide differences in rank for boys and girls are considered, it seems safe to make certain generalizations. These relate to characteristics that tended to divide the sexes in matters of preference. Stated briefly, they are as follows:

1. The girls were highly consistent in their liking for poems that dealt with home life. The boys were equally consistent in not preferring such poems. It will be noted, for instance, that *Autumn* has a rank of 11 with the girls and 32 with the boys; *Little Homes*, a rank of 15.5 with the girls and 44 with the boys; *An Old Woman of the Roads*, a rank of 18 with the girls and 75.5 with the boys; and *Old Susan*, a rank of 20 with the girls and 88 with the boys.

2. Both boys and girls appear to have preferred poems that dealt with their own sex. Often even the use in a title of a proper name that suggested one sex or the other seems to have influenced choices. This effect on preference of the sex of the character portrayed in a poem can be seen if the differences in ranking are noted for such poems as *Tarantella*, *The Princess*, *Three Cherry Trees*, *Eve*, and *Scotty Bill*. All of these, except the last, were much better liked by the girls than by the boys. However, the rejection of a poem because it dealt with the opposite sex was, on the whole, more common with the boys than with the girls.

3. The boys were most definite in their preference for poems that dealt with crude but colorful characters. When such poems also portrayed action or adventure, as they frequently did, their percentage for preference ran high. If Table 9 on pages 75 and 78 is checked, it will be seen that poems of this nature show marked sex differences. For instance, *The Ballad of John Silver* has a rank of 2 with the boys and 31 with the girls; *Spanish Waters*, a rank of 20 with the boys and 42 with the girls; *Spanish Johnny*, a rank of 27 with the boys and 51.5 with the girls; and *Tarry Buccaneer*, a rank of 19 with the boys and 86.5 with the girls.

4. The boys tended to favor poems that dealt with war and violent action of any sort, while the girls very consistently seemed to rate low all such poems. Note, for instance, that *Boots* has a rank of 24.5 with the boys and 54 with the girls, and *The Man He Killed*, a rank of 43 with the boys and 112 with the girls.

5. The girls consistently ranked nature poems higher than did the boys. These, however, were not favorites with either sex.

6. The boys and girls differed widely in humor preference. The girls ranked high poems that were amusing or playful. The boys ranked high poems that were broadly comic. Note, for instance, that *The Terrible Infant* has a rank of 8 with the girls and of 23 with the boys; *The Gingham Umbrella*, a rank of 12 with the girls and 52.5 with the boys; *The Buffalo*, a rank of 12 with the boys and 40.5 with the girls; and *The Chimpanzee*, a rank of 45 with the boys and 73.5 with the girls.

A fair picture of sex differences in poetry preferences, as these appeared in the choices of the children included in this study, can be gained by merely noting in Table 9 the title of the fourteen poems that are marked with a dagger. Since all these were not only more than twenty ranks apart for boys and girls but also placed in the top quarter of the material for either one sex or the other, they are highly indicative of differences in taste.

When the rankings of boys and girls for least liked are compared in order to see whether these negative ratings throw any light on the question of differences in preferences between the sexes, the indication seems to be that the boys and girls agreed less on what they did not like than on what they liked. This is suggested by the correlation of $.70 \pm .03$ obtained between the rankings of boys and girls of poems for least liked.

A question arises as to the fundamental basis of the disagreement between boys and girls in matters of preference. Did certain poems that ranked high with the girls rank low with the boys because such poems were actually distasteful to them? Or, did they rank low because the boys were indifferent to them and so failed to choose them as best liked? A comparison of the rankings of poems for least liked

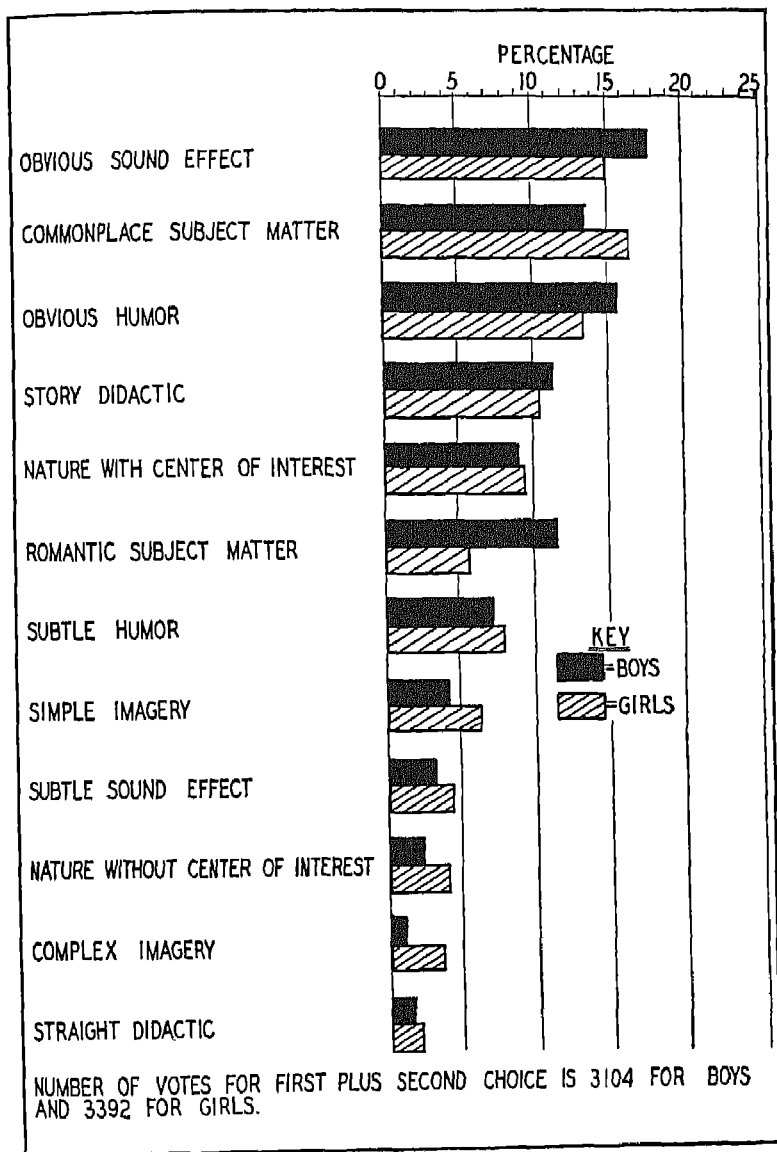


FIGURE II. Poetry Preferences of Boys and Girls as Indicated by Percentages of Total Choices According to Category.

by boys and girls should suggest whether relative indifference or something that approximated dislike operated to cause differences in preferences.

An examination of the rankings indicates that there was no consistent tendency on the part of either boys or girls to rank high for least liked, poems that had been definitely preferred by the other sex. If one poem, *Jazz Fantasia*, is excepted, as this ranked high with boys and girls for both best liked and least liked, only seven poems liked well enough by the boys to place in the first sixty ranks for preference appear in the girls' first thirty ranks for least liked. Moreover, as four of these seven ranked high with the boys for least liked as well as for best liked, the suggestion is that these poems tended to divide opinion even among the boys. The poems that ranked in the top half of the material with boys for preference and appeared in girls' first thirty ranks for least liked are *Boots*, *John Brown*, *Dead Men Tell No Tales*, *Song of Shadows*, *The Man He Killed*, *Groundswell*, and *The Unpardonable Sin*. The nature of these poems suggests that the girls reacted negatively to poems that portrayed violent action, bloodshed, or even unpleasant or unhappy incidents.

Three poems that placed in the first sixty ranks for preference with girls, *The Princess*, *In Springtime*, and *Boots*, ranked in the first thirty ranks for least liked with boys. The position given the first two of these poems for least liked by the boys is in harmony with their general attitude toward nature poems or poems that contain fairly complex imagery. The rank given *Boots* must be explained in a large part by the fact that it tended to divide opinion regardless of sex.

Considered as a whole, the ranks for least liked seem to indicate that poems which showed marked sex differences when ranked for preference did so largely because the positive tastes of the boys and girls were dissimilar. Actual distaste was not an important factor. This was less true with the girls than with the boys, but even with them dislike was not a significant influence. The poems that ranked high with the boys failed to rank high with the girls because the girls had placed their choices elsewhere.

When critical ratios were computed on percentages of first plus

second choices for best-liked poems in order to measure extent and direction of sex difference in preference, the results were highly similar to those obtained by the methods already discussed.

In Table 10 on pages 84 to 86 are included all poems used as part of the experimental material that had critical ratios of four or more for sex difference. If this table is examined, it will be noted that 75 of the 120 poems used showed sex differences in preference. This gives a fair indication of how consistent and pervasive was the influence of sex on choices throughout the investigation. However, only 38 of these differences can be considered as indicative in relation to majority opinion as the remaining 37 are on poems that received less than 10 per cent of the preferences of either boys or girls on the day on which they were presented. In fact, 17 of the 37 received less than 5 per cent of the choices of either boys or girls in their experimental period. However, all poems with critical ratios of four or more are listed, since even those based on small percentages are significant in relation to minority opinion among either boys and girls. For instance, in the straight didactic, nature without a center of interest, subtle sound effect, and simple and complex imagery subdivisions, there are 25 poems with critical ratios of four or more, though only one of these received more than 10 per cent of the choices of either boys or girls when it was presented. Of these 25 only 2 received a higher percentage of choices from the boys than from the girls. This makes clear the direction of minority taste among the girls.

When the percentages of the 38 poems that were popular with the majority of either boys or girls are examined, it will be noted that sex differences were, in a large number of cases, due to degree rather than direction of preference. In such cases the critical ratios merely indicate that the poems were definitely better liked by one sex or the other. They were relatively well liked by both boys and girls.

In Table 10 the poems are grouped according to categories and their subdivisions, so that differences in preferences as these fall into subdivisions can be readily observed. Percentages as well as critical ratios are included so that extent of preference as well as sex difference in preference can be estimated.

TABLE 10

DIFFERENCES IN POETRY PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE BOYS AND GIRLS
AS INDICATED BY PERCENTAGES OF CHOICES AND BY CRITICAL RATIOS

Subdivision	Title of Poem	PER CENT ^a			C.R. ^b	
		Boys	Girls	Diff.	Poem Pre-ferred by—	
					Boys	Girls
Obvious	The Buffalo	22.1	9.2	12.9	13.6	
Humor	The Gingham Umbrella . . .	6.2	18.2	12.0		13.5
	The Big Baboon	26.3	16.9	9.4	9.7	
	The Horrible Cow	21.7	14.1	7.6	8.6	
	The Ambitious Haddock . .	19.3	13.1	6.2	6.9	
	*The Chimpanzee	8.7	4.6	4.1	6.7	
	The Shark and the Flying Fish	7.6	11.7	4.1		6.1
	The Family Fool	16.9	10.5	6.4	7.5	
Subtle Humor	I'm Nobody	6.2	10.6	4.4		6.9
	A Terrible Infant	16.5	22.3	5.8		6.5
	†The Unexplorer	0.7	2.0	1.3		4.3
	†The Wayfarer	0.3	1.6	1.3		4.1
Story	Mary's Son	4.0	10.1	6.1		9.6
Didactic	*The Man He Killed	8.9	0.9	8.0	9.5	
	Caliban in the Coal Mines .	17.3	10.5	6.8	7.9	
	Out of Work	21.8	17.1	4.7	5.2	
	Lucinda	10.7	13.5	2.8		4.0
Straight Didactic	*The Unpardonable Sin . . .	5.0	1.7	3.3	6.2	
	*Laugh and Be Merry	2.6	5.5	2.9		6.1
	†Illumination	0.6	2.8	2.2		5.6
	†Prayer	2.2	4.1	1.9		4.5
	†Leisure	2.1	3.7	1.6		4.1
Commonplace	An Old Woman of the Roads	0.7	14.3	13.6		13.9
Subject	Old Susan	2.0	13.8	11.8		13.2
Matter	Scotty Bill	18.8	9.2	9.6	10.9	

^a Percentages are based on first plus second choices for preference received by poems in their experimental period.

^b Of the 120 poems used in the experiment, all that had critical ratios of four or more are included.

* Indicates a poem that received less than 10 per cent of the choice of either boys or girls on the day in which it was presented.

† Indicates a poem that received less than 5 per cent of the choices of either boys or girls on the day in which it was presented.

TABLE 10 (Continued)

Subdivision	Title of Poem	PER CENT ^a			C.R. ^b	
		Boys	Girls	Diff.	Poem Preferred by—	
					Boys	Girls
Commonplace Subject Matter (Continued)	Little Homes	8.8	16.9	8.1		10.3
	Storekeeper	26.4	18.8	7.6	7.9	
	I've Got a Dog	23.4	31.2	7.8		7.7
	Little Lost Pup	32.6	40.6	8.0		6.9
	*Blessings on Little Boys . .	5.4	8.3	2.9		4.7
	*Marble Top	5.5	3.4	2.1	4.3	
Romantic Subject Matter	Ballad of John Silver	33.6	11.5	22.1	20.0	
	A Tarry Buccaneer	17.1	3.2	13.9	13.9	
	Spanish Waters	17.1	9.1	8.0	8.9	
	Spanish Johnny	14.9	8.0	6.9	8.4	
	A Wanderer's Song	14.0	8.0	6.0	7.7	
	*Dead Men Tell No Tales . .	7.1	3.2	4.0	7.0	
	*A Vagabond Song	9.1	4.5	4.6	6.9	
	†Dream Pedlary	0.9	2.8	1.9		5.2
	*Song of Aengus	4.9	7.3	2.4		4.4
Nature with Center of Interest	Three Cherry Trees	3.4	12.4	9.0		11.4
	*A Passing Glimpse	1.3	7.7	6.4		9.8
	Horse	27.6	18.0	9.6	9.6	
	†When the Year Grows Old . .	2.3	2.8	0.5		9.2
	Four Little Foxes	15.6	12.0	3.6	4.2	
	†Cow in Apple Time	4.8	2.9	1.9	4.1	
Nature with- out Center of Interest	*Snow Toward Evening	2.2	6.4	4.2		7.1
	*In Springtime	4.8	8.9	4.1		6.9
	*All That's Past	2.4	5.1	2.7		5.6
	†The Holly	1.3	3.7	2.4		5.5
	†Autumn Chant	0.6	2.3	1.7		5.0
Obvious Sound Effect	Stranger	9.8	21.8	12.0		13.3
	Boots	15.6	7.8	7.8	9.0	
	Simon Legree	36.1	28.6	7.5	7.1	
	Cavalier	15.0	8.9	6.1	7.6	
	John Brown	12.9	7.2	5.7	7.5	
	Broom	31.4	25.7	5.7	5.2	
	Tarantella	9.2	12.9	3.7		5.2
	Where Do the Gypsies Come From?	17.2	13.0	4.2	5.1	
	Jumping River Dances	12.0	8.9	3.1	4.4	

TABLE 10 (Continued)

Subdivision	Title of Poem	PER CENT ^a			C.R. ^b	
		Boys	Girls	Diff.	Poem Pre-ferred by—	
					Boys	Girls
Subtle	†Scythe Song	0.7	4.6	3.9		7.4
Sound Effect	†Eve	1.3	4.9	3.6		7.3
	†Chill of Eve	0.7	4.0	3.3		6.9
	*Groundswell	6.0	2.6	3.4	6.3	
	†The Shell	1.8	4.9	3.1		6.2
	†Fog Bell	2.4	4.4	2.0		4.7
Simple	Autumn	12.5	18.7	6.2		7.6
Imagery	*Poem of Praise	3.9	8.3	4.4		7.5
	†City Trees	0.7	3.2	2.5		6.0
	†Grantchester	2.2	4.4	2.2		5.0
	*The Pear Tree	3.4	5.4	2.0		4.0
Complex Imagery	*The Princess	1.7	8.6	6.9		9.7
	*Frost Tonight	2.8	7.3	4.5		8.1
	*Joy and Pleasure	1.0	5.5	4.5		7.7
	*The Willow	2.6	6.3	3.7		7.1

SEX DIFFERENCES IN PROSE PREFERENCES

Two measures were used to evaluate differences in the preferences of boys and girls in the prose study, the ranks given subdivisions and the ranks given individual selections.

If Table 7 on page 62 is referred to, it will be seen that there is perfect agreement in the ranking of boys and girls in three of the eight subdivisions. In the remaining subdivisions there is considerable variation. However, if the percentages rather than the ranks are considered, it will be seen that, with the exception of subtle humor and possibly the story didactic, the actual differences are slight in all subdivisions. It will be noted, however, that though obvious humor is unquestionably the favorite with the girls, it is even more markedly liked by the boys.

When, however, individual selections rather than subdivisions were considered, fairly marked sex differences in preference could be seen. In six cases ranks were identical; in six additional cases they were

not more than five places apart. In the remaining twenty selections, there were fairly wide differences.

But, as ranks in the prose study were not reliable because of the skewed distribution of preferences, percentages had to be considered in arriving at sex differences. When these were examined, some fairly distinct tendencies could be observed. These were as follows:

1. The sex of the central character was definitely important in influencing choices. This was markedly so with boys and slightly so with girls. The combined percentages of all stories that had a girl as the central figure was 27.8 for the girls and only 6 for the boys. The combined percentages of all stories that had a boy as the central figure was 21 for the boys and 19.4 for the girls.

2. The interest in animals was markedly greater with the boys than with the girls. The six selections that had an animal as the central figure received 59.7 per cent of the boys' votes and 39.5 per cent of the girls' votes. This difference may have been due, however, to the fact that two of these selections were broadly humorous. Though both of these stories were definitely preferred by both boys and girls, the percentages of choices for them were much greater with the boys than with the girls. However, percentages of choices in even the less-liked selections that portrayed an animal, were consistently greater for boys than for girls.

3. Interest in nature was twice as great with the girls as with the boys. Though the four selections that were pure descriptions of nature with no story element or center of interest were not by any means favorites with either boys or girls, they received 5.5 per cent of all choices of the girls and 2.7 per cent of those of the boys.

4. The girls scattered their votes more than the boys did. The three selections that were best liked by the boys received 56.4 per cent of all their choices. The three selections best liked by the girls received 46 per cent of all their votes.

5. Boys and girls agreed on their liking for the two top-ranking selections. Since these selections were both classified as obvious humor and had an animal as the central figure, it can be assumed that the combination of these two things was outstandingly interesting to both boys and girls.

SEX DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES IN THE PUPIL INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

Three methods were used in arriving at differences of preferences of boys and girls as these appeared in the results of the questionnaire. These were: a consideration of rankings of subdivisions; a comparison of boys' and girls' choices in the pair situation; and an analysis of individual items that showed marked differences in preferences of boys and girls.

If Table 8 on page 64 is referred to, it will be noted that the boys and girls were in complete agreement on the ranking of one subdivision, the straight didactic, and that they were within one rank of each other in four others. When percentages rather than ranks are considered, certain differences appear. These are as follows:

1. Obvious humor was definitely better liked by the boys than by the girls.
2. Nature, either with or without a center of interest, appealed more to the girls than to the boys.
3. The story didactic was rated higher by the boys than by the girls.
4. Romantic subject matter was slightly more popular with the girls than with the boys.

This last difference, the preference for the romantic on the part of the girls, which seems to run counter to the other findings in this study on sex differences, can best be explained by reference to the items in the questionnaire used to measure this interest. Since this has been discussed in some detail in Chapter VII, it will not be gone into here. An examination of the items, as these appear in tabular form on pages 66 and 67, will be helpful throughout this portion of the discussion of sex differences.

When a comparison was made of the preferences of the boys and girls as these were expressed in the pair situation, two approaches were used: differences in bulked percentages for the *a* and *b* subdivisions in the four categories; and direction of choices in individual pairs. If Table 5 on page 54 is examined, it will be seen that the

humor category shows fairly marked sex differences and the didactic some sex differences. These, it will be noted, tend to confirm the rankings of subdivisions, which were based on percentages of first and second choices. The percentages on the pair basis for the two remaining categories are, however, remarkably close, but this is not confirmed by either subdivision rankings or direction in pair choices. This is due, in part, to the fact that the method used tended to smooth out differences and to indicate only general trends of preference. For this reason, comparisons of bulked percentages of subdivisions are only moderately helpful in suggesting sex differences in preference.

When direction of choices in pairs in the subdivisions was used as the criteria, sex differences could be observed a little more readily. If the percentages on the items as these appear on pages 66 and 67 are noted, it will be seen that there were some differences of direction between boys and girls in pair choices. These were as follows:

1. In the humor category, the boys chose obvious humor in all four pairs. In two pairs the difference was insignificant, but the direction remained the same. The girls, however, chose obvious and subtle humor an equal number of times.
2. In the commonplace and romantic subject matter category, the commonplace was chosen twice by the boys and only once by the girls.

When individual items that showed marked differences in the preferences of boys and girls were analyzed, there emerged certain interest elements that were more operative with one sex than the other. These can be observed if the percentages on these items are noted. For instance, comic moving pictures, funny papers, and jokes were more attractive to the boys than to the girls. On the other hand, beautifully dressed people and fine homes were definitely more interesting to the girls than to the boys. Also the girls, though they shared the boys' definite preference for explorers and adventurers, showed a markedly greater interest in ordinary people of the type that would be part of their own environment. In their choices in pairs

14 and 16, the girls similarly evinced a higher degree of interest in people than did the boys.

On the whole, the questionnaire findings suggest degree of emphasis on interests rather than actual differences between boys and girls. The greater similarity between boys and girls that is indicated by the questionnaire than by the poetry or the prose study is due, no doubt, to the fact that the item form cannot distinguish between the sexes as can actual presentations of material.

CHAPTER IX

The Influence of Reading Comprehension on Poetry Preferences

AS IT seemed reasonable to assume that reading comprehension might have some influence on poetry preferences at the junior high school level, a comparison was made between the preferences of children who represented the upper and the lower levels of reading ability in the group. Reading comprehension scores were used as a basis for the selection of groups for comparison, as such scores were at once logically related to the problem under study and highly correlated with intelligence.

It will be remembered that while there was a total enrollment of 362 in the ten classes included in the experiment, the largest number present during any period in which poetry was read was 342. Of the children who participated in the experiment, reading comprehension scores on the Modern School Achievement Tests were available for only 298. This was due to the fact that the tests had been given during the previous year and in the intervening period new children had entered the schools. As it was impossible under such circumstances to make a division into upper and lower quartiles for the entire participating group, it was decided to take twenty-five per cent at the top and twenty-five per cent at the bottom of the distribution of reading comprehension scores and use these as approximate equivalents of an upper and lower quartile.

When the cases were selected, there were 77 in the upper group and 76 in the lower group. This slight increase seemed permissible, as it appeared to allow for more truly representative groups at both ends of the distribution. So far as possible the two groups were equated also on the basis of sex and chronological age. Grade scores in reading comprehension for the lower group fell between 2.5 and 6.3, and for the upper group between 8.2 and 10 +. It must be re-

membered that these scores had been made in the second month of the seventh year.

For purposes of comparison between the upper and the lower group, only the five days that constituted the second half of the period given over to the reading of poetry were used. It was assumed that the 60 poems which constituted half of the experimental material would provide an adequate basis for comparisons. Moreover, only first and second choices for best liked and least liked were considered, as these seemed more indicative of preference than pair choices. No change was made in the actual grouping of the children. This aspect of the study was merely a matter of retabulation, reranking, and further mathematical manipulation.

Three main approaches were used to arrive at differences in poetry preferences of the upper and lower groups. These were as follows:

1. Intercorrelations between the groups by the Spearman Rank Difference Method on rankings for best liked and least liked.
2. Comparison of rankings of subdivisions for best and least liked by the two groups.
3. Analysis of poems that showed marked differences in ranking between the groups.

The correlation computed on rankings for preference of the sixty poems indicated that the two groups agreed fairly well on what they liked. As this was $.86 \pm .02$ and the correlation between the ranks for preference of all boys and girls in the whole experimental group on all 120 poems, $.81 \pm .02$, it seems clear that sex was at least as potent a factor in disagreement as differences in reading comprehension.

When correlations on rankings for preference were computed for the sexes separately, these were consistently lower than the $.86 \pm .02$ obtained for the two groups. The correlation between the girls of the upper and the lower groups was $.73 \pm .04$; the correlation between the boys of the upper and the lower groups was $.77 \pm .03$.

When correlations were computed to measure the extent of agreement between the sexes in each of these groups, these ran consistently lower than the $.81 \pm .02$ obtained for all the boys and girls. The correlations of ranks for preference between the sexes were $.70 \pm .04$ in the upper group and $.72 \pm .04$ in the lower group. These lower

correlations very probably indicate, not greater sex differences in these groups, but rather the greater instability of ranks based on percentages derived from a small number of cases.

The correlation computed on rankings of the upper and the lower groups for least liked indicates that the children in these groups agreed much less on what they did not like than on what they liked. This correlation of $.72 \pm .04$ on least liked suggests that the lower group may have chosen poems as least liked for reasons that were rather different from those that influenced the upper group in their choices. Reading comprehension may have entered in here. A negative attitude toward certain poems may have been created in the lower group by a failure to understand them. Such a reason would naturally be less operative with the upper group. This would account, in part, for the relatively low correlation between the groups on ranks for least liked. The higher correlation on preferences could likewise be explained in relation to this. Since characteristics that may have tended to make certain poems preferred by the lower group—for instance, simplicity, clearness of idea, and directness of effect—were in all probability also attractive to the upper group, the two groups would tend to draw closer to each other on positive ratings and divide on negative ratings.

RANKS OF SUBDIVISIONS FOR BEST LIKED

When a comparison is made of the two groups on the basis of their preferences according to subdivisions, some fairly definite tendencies can be seen. If Table 11 on page 94 is referred to, it will be noted that, while obvious sound effect ranks first with both groups, the percentages indicate that it was definitely more appealing to the lower group. In three other subdivisions that rank in the first half for both groups, obvious humor, nature with a center of interest, and story didactic, percentages run consistently higher in the lower group than they do in the upper group. As, with the possible exception of nature with a center of interest, all poems in these subdivisions have some story element, marked liveliness, and clearly defined patterns, it is probable that they offered little difficulty to the lower group in the matter of comprehension and so were well liked.

TABLE 11

INFLUENCE OF READING COMPREHENSION ON POETRY PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN AS INDICATED BY RANKING OF SUBDIVISIONS OF CATEGORIES BY UPPER AND LOWER GROUPS

Subdivision	Upper ^a and Lower Groups				Boys of Upper and Lower Groups				Girls of Upper and Lower Groups			
	Rank ^b		Per Cent ^a		Rank		Per Cent		Rank		Per Cent	
	U	L	U	L	U	L	U	L	U	L	U	L
Obvious Sound Effect . .	1	1	17.6	23.1	1	1	22.6	26.0	1	1	13.0	20.0
Commonplace Subject Matter	2	5	11.7	8.7	3	6	10.6	8.6	2	5	12.7	8.8
Obvious Humor	3	2	11.5	14.8	2	2	14.6	17.0	5.5	2	8.6	12.4
Nature with Center of Interest	4	3	9.6	11.7	6.5	3.5	7.4	12.2	3	3	11.6	11.2
Subtle Humor	5	6	8.7	8.6	4	5	9.2	9.2	7	6	8.4	7.9
Story Didactic	6	4	8.1	11.3	6.5	3.5	7.4	12.2	5.5	4	8.6	10.3
Romantic Subject Matter	7	7	7.6	6.7	5	7	8.6	7.0	8	8	6.8	6.4
Simple Imagery	8	8	7.4	4.6	8	8	5.4	2.4	4	7	9.2	7.0
Subtle Sound Effect	9	9	5.8	3.4	9	9.5	4.9	1.6	9	9	6.5	5.5
Complex Imagery	10	11	4.6	2.4	10	11.5	4.0	1.1	10	11	5.1	3.9
Nature without Center of Interest	11	10	3.8	2.7	11	11.5	2.9	1.1	12	10	4.6	4.5
Straight Didactic	12	12	3.6	1.9	12	9.5	2.3	1.6	11	12	4.9	2.1

^a U is used to designate upper group; L is used for lower group.

^b Rank of 1 indicates best-liked subdivision.

^c Percentages for ranks of upper group were obtained by dividing sum of first plus second choices for five poems in a subdivision by 719, the total number of first plus second choices made by them. The percentages for the lower group, for boys, and for girls in both groups were obtained by a similar method.

Number of choices were as follows: entire upper group, 719; entire lower group, 700; boys of upper group, 349; boys of lower group, 370; girls of upper group, 370; girls of lower group, 330.

The smaller percentage given the commonplace subject matter subdivision by the lower group than by the upper group seems at first contradictory, as the poems in this subdivision were all rather simple. However, the rather moderate degree of interest manifested in them by the lower group may have been due to the fact that they dealt with the ordinary and everyday and did not challenge attention by any dramatic quality. A general picture of the preferences of the two groups can be got from an examination of Figure III on page 95.

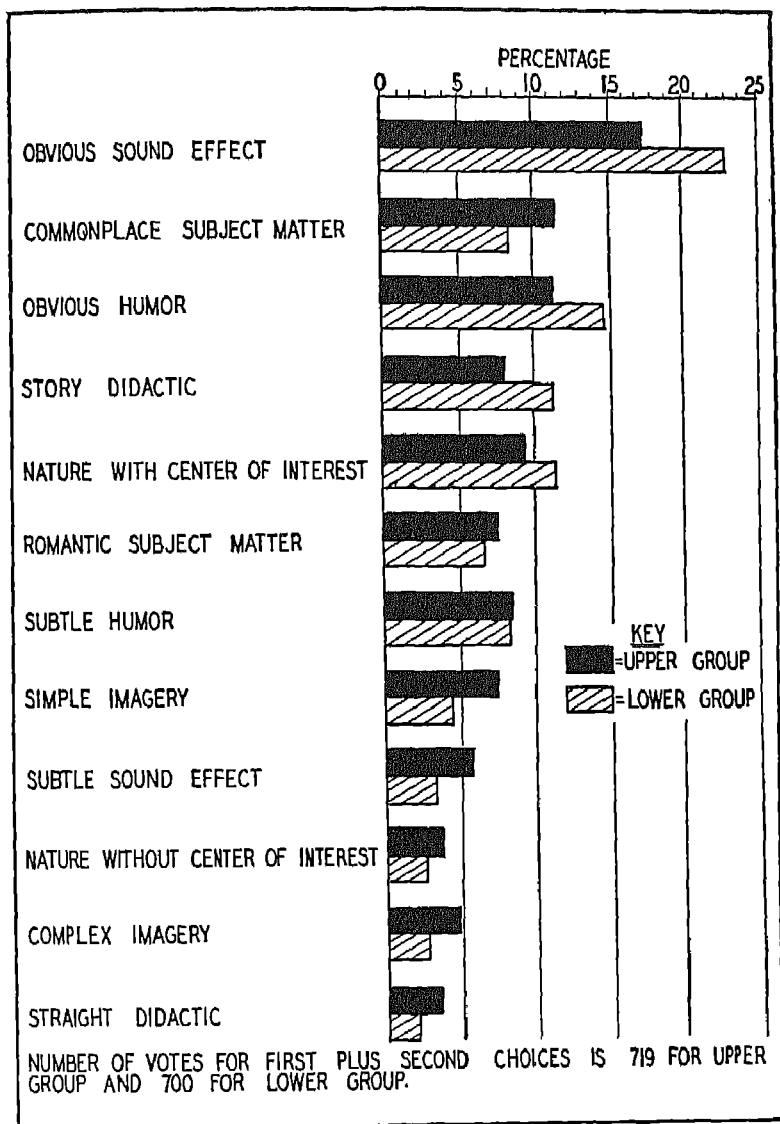


FIGURE III. Poetry Preferences of Upper Group and Lower Group as Indicated by Percentage of Total Choices According to Subdivision. Group Placement Made on the Basis of Reading Comprehension.

It will be noted that the less popular subdivisions received consistently higher percentages for preference from the upper group than they did from the lower group. For instance, the two subdivisions of the imagery category were given 7 per cent of the choices of the lower group and 11 per cent of the choices of the upper group. If the percentages of simple and complex imagery, nature without a center of interest, and straight didactic, are bulked, these total 19.4 per cent for the upper group and 11.6 per cent for the lower group. As these four subdivisions all contained poems that are relatively static and demand some degree of concentration for comprehension, it is conceivable that their ranking was affected by the probable differences in intelligence between the two groups of children. The same factor may have accounted for the greater percentages accorded the *b* subdivision throughout by the upper group.

If the percentages for preference of the boys and girls in the two groups are compared, some interesting differences and similarities can be observed. For this the percentages in columns 7, 8, 11, and 12 in Table 11 must be consulted. The conclusions suggested by these figures are as follows:

1. Obvious sound effect is the best-liked subdivision for both boys and girls of the two groups. It is, however, better liked by the boys of either group than by the girls. Its appeal is least to the girls of the upper group and greatest to the boys of the lower group. Cross comparisons between the groups and between the sexes within the two groups, suggest that its ranking was influenced by both sex and intelligence, as indicated by reading comprehension.

2. Preferences for obvious humor, like those for obvious sound effect, seem to have been influenced by both sex and intelligence. When comparisons are made between the sexes within either group, the percentages for preference are definitely higher in the lower group than in the upper group. When, however, comparisons are made between groups as well as between sexes, it will be noted that obvious humor received more choices from the boys of the upper group than from the girls of the lower group. Its appeal was least to the girls of the lower group.

3. Commonplace subject matter was more attractive to the upper

group than it was to the lower group. It was most appealing to the girls of the upper group and least appealing to the boys of the lower group.

4. The poems in the story didactic subdivisions were better liked by the lower group than by the upper group. Sex was not the influence in this instance, since these poems received the fewest choices from the boys of the upper group and greatest number of choices from the boys of the lower group.

5. The relatively small differences there are in the subtle humor and romantic subject matter subdivisions seem to be due to sex rather than to differences in reading comprehension. There are some indications, particularly in the girls' percentages, that these subdivisions are more attractive to the upper group than to the lower group, but these indications are slight.

6. If the three subdivisions, the poems of which approximate pure nature poems, imagery *a* and *b*, and nature without a center of interest, are treated together, it can be seen that both sex and intelligence, as indicated by reading comprehension, have influenced preferences. When cross comparisons are made between groups and between sexes, it is clear that the girls of either group liked nature poems better than did boys of either group. It is also clear, however, that percentages were greater for such poems, regardless of sex, in the higher group. Since these subdivisions received 18.9 per cent of the votes of the girls of the upper group and only 4.6 per cent of the votes of the boys of the lower group, it is possible to estimate the combined effect of differences in sex and in reading comprehension.

When comparisons of the two groups are made on the basis of their choices for least liked, it is rather difficult to detect any clear-cut differentiation between the groups. If Table 12 on page 98 is examined it will be seen that the ranking of subdivisions for least liked does not merely reverse the order for best liked. Apparently in these rankings, as in those based on choices of boys and girls, the element of indifference entered in as an important influence. A poem may not have been sufficiently liked to have been chosen as best liked and yet it may not have aroused a response definitely negative enough to be selected as least liked. Consequently, there is not so

great a difference as might be expected in the percentages for least liked given popular and relatively unpopular subdivisions. There is, however, a definite and consistent tendency for the poems in well-liked subdivisions to receive few votes for least liked. For instance, the four subdivisions best liked by the boys in the lower group received only 14.3 per cent of their votes for least liked, while the four subdivisions that ranked low with them for best liked received 47.3 per cent of their votes for least liked.

If the percentages in Table 12 are noted, it is far from clear that

TABLE 12
INFLUENCE OF READING COMPREHENSION ON POETRY CHOICES OF EIGHTH
GRADE CHILDREN AS INDICATED BY RANKING FOR LEAST LIKED OF
SUBDIVISIONS OF CATEGORIES BY UPPER AND LOWER GROUPS

Subdivision	Upper ^a and Lower Groups				Boys of Upper and Lower Groups				Girls of Upper and Lower Groups			
	Rank ^b		Per Cent ^c		Rank		Per Cent		Rank		Per Cent	
	U	L	U	L	U	L	U	L	U	L	U	L
Subtle Humor	1	2	15.6	12.1	1	4	15.5	12.7	1	1	15.7	11.5
Complex Imagery	2	3	14.2	11.9	2	2	14.3	13.5	2.5	3.5	14.1	10.0
Subtle Sound Effect	3	1	13.1	12.4	3	1	12.0	14.6	2.5	3.5	14.1	10.0
Straight Didactic	4	4	8.6	10.4	5	3	9.7	13.2	5	6.5	7.5	8.8
Nature without a Center of Interest	5	5	8.3	10.1	4	5	11.1	10.0	10	2	5.7	10.3
Obvious Humor	6	8	7.9	6.9	6	8.5	8.6	5.1	6.5	6.5	7.3	8.8
Commonplace Subject Matter	7	6	7.8	8.3	8	7	6.9	7.0	4	5	8.6	9.7
Simple Imagery	8	7	7.2	7.6	7	6	7.7	9.5	8	11.5	6.7	5.4
Story Didactic	9	9	6.5	6.6	9	10	5.7	4.6	6.5	8	7.3	7.3
Obvious Sound Effect ..	10	11	5.0	4.3	10	12	3.5	1.9	9	9	6.5	7.0
Nature with a Center of Interest	11	12	3.1	4.1	11	11	3.2	2.7	12	10	3.0	5.8
Romantic Subject Matter	12	10	2.7	5.3	12	8.5	1.7	5.1	11	11.5	3.5	5.4

^a U is used to designate upper group; L is used to designate lower group.

^b Rank of 1 indicates least liked subdivision.

^c Percentages for ranks of upper group were obtained by dividing sum of first plus second choices for least liked for five poems in a subdivision by 719, the total number of first plus second choices for least liked made by them. The percentages for the lower group, for boys and for girls in both groups were obtained by a similar method.

The number of choices were as follows: entire upper group, 719; entire lower group, 700; boys of upper group, 349; boys of lower group, 370; girls of upper group, 370; girls of lower group, 330.

reading comprehension influenced negative choices to any appreciable extent. In fact, the three subdivisions that were least liked by both groups, received a larger number of negative choices from the upper group than they did from the lower group. Only in the straight didactic, nature without a center of interest, and romantic subject matter, do the percentages go in the opposite direction.

When the ranks of individual poems were examined to see to what extent the two groups differed in their tastes, the results were again somewhat indecisive. There were some observable differences, but to what extent these were due to causes other than differences in reading comprehension would be difficult to determine.

The two groups agreed with each other and with the total group in the ranking of poems that were definitely popular. The first seven poems for the entire group fell within the top ten ranks for both the upper and the lower groups. In terms of the total group, the lower group was slightly more predictable than the upper group, as its first eight ranks fell within the top ten ranks for the total group.

When rankings by boys and girls of the two groups were considered separately, it was clear that, in terms of the total group, the girls of the lower group were the most predictable of all the lesser groups, as their first ten ranks fell within the first ten for the total group. The boys of the lower group were almost equally predictable, as their first nine ranks fell within the total group's top ten. On the other hand, only six of the top ten ranks of the boys of the upper group fell within the top ten of the total group. The girls of the upper group were the least predictable of all the lesser groups, as only three of their top ranks fell within the top ten for the entire group.

When rank differences were noted, the following facts emerged:

1. Of the 60 poems used, 18 had differences in rank of ten places or more between the upper and lower groups. Of these, 12 ranked in the top half of the material for one group or the other.
2. The poems ranked higher by the upper group than by the lower group and in the top half of the material for the upper group were in the less popular categories and, with one exception, in the *b* subdivision.

3. The 7 poems ranked higher by the lower group and in the top half for them were in the popular subdivisions.

4. When lesser differences were examined, there was noted a consistent tendency on the part of the upper group to rate higher poems in the *b* subdivisions and in the less popular categories than they were rated by the lower group. For instance, 8 of the 10 poems included in the imagery category received a larger number of choices from the upper group than from the lower group.

On the whole, regardless of which approach is taken, certain general conclusions in regard to differences between these groups seem justified. Briefly summarized, they are as follows:

1. The upper group tended to scatter their choices more than did the lower group and to give higher rank to poems in the imagery and nature categories and in the subtle sound effect subdivision.

2. The lower group tended to rank high poems that were comic or had well-defined patterns in terms of either story or sound effect. They tended to rank correspondingly low poems that were relatively static and depended on imagery or descriptive detail for their effect.

3. The girls of the lower group seemed to occupy a middle ground between the girls of the upper group and the boys of the upper group. They liked the poems classified as nature, imagery, or subtle sound effect more than did the boys of their own group but definitely less than did the girls of the upper group.

The differences between the groups were, however, largely differences in degree rather than in direction. The poems that were either definitely liked or definitely not liked were agreed upon fairly well by both groups. The lower group seemed to represent something like mass opinion with which the upper group, on the whole, coincided. The tastes of the upper group, especially the girls of the upper group, were more highly individualized, more eclectic.

It must be kept in mind, in evaluating differences between groups selected on the basis of reading comprehension, that all poems were read aloud to the children by a trained reader. Consequently, differences between groups would not emerge in such a situation as clearly as if the children had read the poems to themselves.

CHAPTER X

The Relationship Between Placement of Poems for Best Liked and Least Liked

ONE aspect of poetry preference that seemed significant was the question of the nature of the response aroused by certain types of poetry. Even a casual check of the results indicated that there were three main groupings into which the poems fell when classified according to the response they aroused. These were as follows:

1. Poems for which there was a fairly high degree of consistency in response. These included both poems ranked high for best liked and low for least liked, and poems ranked low for best liked and high for least liked.
2. Poems that aroused definite responses, both positive and negative, and so ranked high for best liked and least liked.
3. Poems to which the response tended to be one of indifference. These included both poems that ranked only fairly high for best liked and low for least liked, and poems that ranked in the lower half of the group for both best liked and least liked.

In order to arrive at a basis for classification of the poems into these three groupings, certain arbitrary division points were selected. All poems for which the sum of the positive and negative ranking fell between 90 and 150 were classified in the first grouping, that of agreement. All poems for which the sum of the positive and negative ranking fell between 0 and 90, were classified in the second grouping, that of the markedly controversial. All poems the combined positive and negative ranking of which fell above 150 were classified in the third group, that to which the response tended to be one of indifference.

These points were arrived at by the following method of reasoning. If there were perfect negative correlation between the ranking

of poems for best liked and least liked, the relationship should be constant for the entire 120 poems and in every case the combined rankings should add up to 121. It will be noticed, if Table 9 on page 75 is examined, that the poem ranked first for best liked for the entire group also ranks last for least liked. In seven of the first nine poems ranked for best liked, this perfect correlation is approximated. It would seem reasonable to assume, therefore, that poems that fell between 90 and 150 represented fair agreement. If, however, a poem ranked high for both best liked and least liked, its combined ranks would be less than 90. An extreme example of such a case is the poem, *Jazz Fantasia*, which ranked 19 for best liked and 20 for least liked. Such a poem obviously divided opinion in the group rather sharply. On this basis, all poems that fell below 90 on their combined rankings were placed in the second group as controversial. In the third group were placed all poems that had combined rankings of more than 150. The significance of this can be seen by looking at the rankings in Table 9 for *Nature's Friend*, an extreme example of a poem to which the response is indifference. Its combined ranking of 185 approaches the theoretical limit of 240, which would indicate absolute indifference as 121 would indicate perfect correlation.

When these groupings are examined certain facts emerge. These can be summarized as follows:

1. For 98 of the 120 poems used there was agreement for the total group within the limits set.
2. Ten of the 120 poems fell in the second division, that of controversy.
 - a. Of these ten, six poems were in the sound effect category, all but one of the six in obvious sound. Two fell into the humor category, one into the didactic, and one in the imagery.
 - b. The lack of agreement on the ten poems in this grouping was probably due, at least in part, to sex as the ratings given them by girls and boys varied widely.
 - c. The entire ten tended to arouse erratic responses that cannot be accounted for entirely on a sex basis even in the poems in which there is a large sex difference. This is especially true of poems

that depend for their appeal upon a repetitive sound effect. This can be seen by looking at the rankings of *Boots* and *Jazz Fantasia*. While there is a fairly marked sex difference in both these poems, there is disagreement also when comparison is confined to rankings for one sex alone. *Boots*, for instance, while preferred by the boys, ranks 24.5 for best liked and 26 for least liked. Likewise, *Jazz Fantasia*, though preferred by the girls, ranks with them 17 for best liked and 15.5 for least liked.

3. Twelve of the poems fell into the limits decided upon as indicating indifference. Of these, four were in the nature category, five classed as imagery, two as subject matter (commonplace), one as didactic. From the standpoint of content, nine might be considered as nature poems as the five classed as imagery also deal with nature.

TABLE 13
POETRY INTERESTS OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN AS INDICATED BY RANKS
FOR LEAST LIKED FOR SUBDIVISIONS OF CATEGORIES

Subdivision	Total Group N = 6,496 Choices		Boys N = 3,104 Choices		Girls N = 3,392 Choices	
	Rank ^a	Per Cent ^b	Rank	Per Cent	Rank	Per Cent
Straight Didactic	1	13.4	3.5	12.4	1	14.3
Subtle Humor	2	13.3	3.5	12.4	2	14.1
Complex Imagery	3	12.2	1	14.1	3	10.5
Subtle Sound Effect	4	11.4	2	13.4	4	9.7
Nature without Center of Interest .	5	9.7	5	11.3	7	8.3
Obvious Sound Effect	6	7.7	7	6.0	5	9.2
Simple Imagery	7	7.6	6	8.4	8.5	6.9
Romantic Subject Matter	8	6.9	8	5.4	6	8.4
Story Didactic	9	6.0	9.5	5.1	8.5	6.9
Obvious Humor	10	5.4	9.5	5.1	10	5.7
Nature with Center of Interest ...	11	3.3	11	3.4	11	3.3
Commonplace Subject Matter	12	2.9	12	2.9	12	2.8

^a Rank of 1 indicates least liked subdivision.

^b Percentages for ranks for least liked were obtained by dividing sum of first plus second choices for least liked for all ten poems in a subdivision by 6,496, the sum of all first plus second choices for least liked for ten periods. Percentages for boys and girls were similarly obtained except that their choices for least liked in a subdivision and their total number of choices were used as bases.

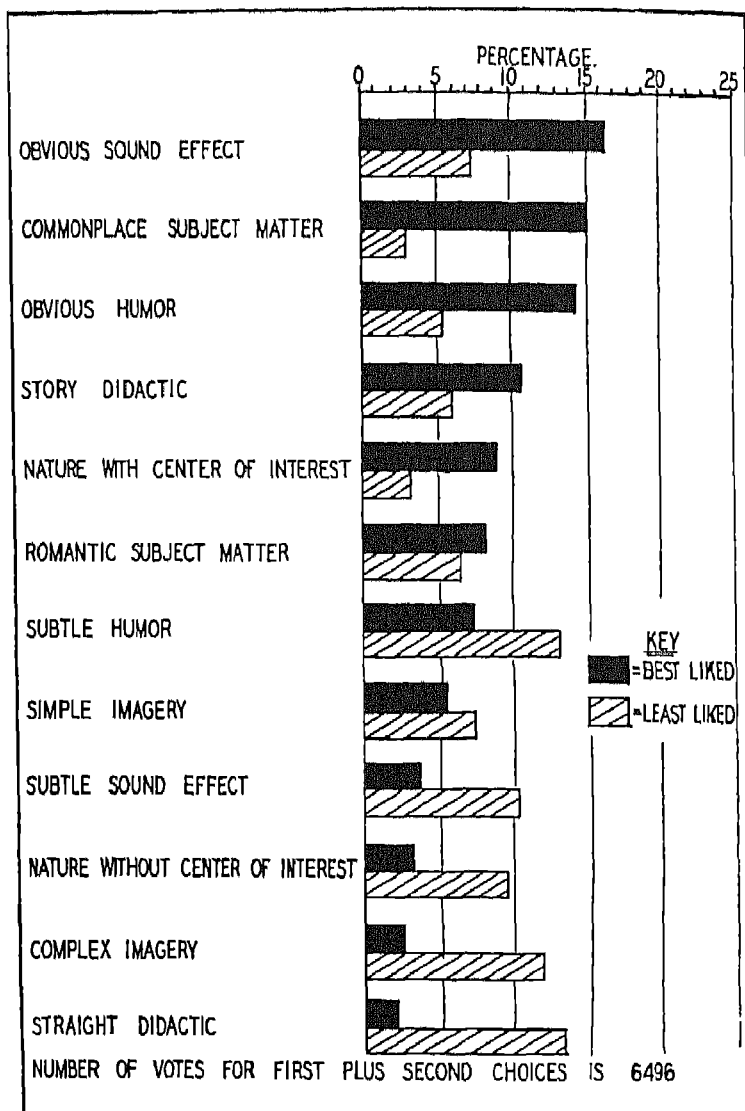


FIGURE IV. Best Liked and Least Liked Poetry as Indicated by Percentage of Total Choices According to Subdivisions of Categories.

All twelve of these poems tend to be static in their effect. They have no action or movement and depend largely on description for their interest. In only two cases out of the twelve is there any suggestion of a character or story element.

In Figure IV on page 104 is shown the contrast between choices for best liked and least liked as these appear when choices for subdivisions are bulked. It will be noted that obvious sound effect, the top ranking subdivision, received practically as many choices for least liked as simple imagery, a little liked subdivision.

The following conclusions are suggested:

1. In a fairly large number of cases (98 out of 120) the ranking of poems by the entire group for best liked and least liked was fairly consistent. By this is meant that poems ranked high for best liked were ranked correspondingly low for least liked.
2. Certain poems, notably those in the obvious sound effect grouping, divided opinion very sharply. They aroused both an active favorable response and a definitely negative response. Their placement, therefore, tends to be erratic and unpredictable.
3. Poems that deal with nature, that are static in effect, and heavily loaded with description, tended to leave the children indifferent. Such poems were not liked, but they did not arouse a definite enough response to cause the children to select them as least liked with any high degree of frequency.

CHAPTER XI

Children's Interpretation of Their Choices

IT IS obvious that any of several approaches could be used in arriving at why children chose certain poems and what if any criteria they applied to literary materials in selecting them. The two main approaches used in this study were an analysis of children's reasons as given by themselves and an evaluation of their reasons, as indicated by their choices, in the light of expert adult judgment. Only the first of these approaches will be discussed in this chapter. The second will be reserved for the following chapter.

The evidence as offered by the children was drawn from the following sources:

1. Tabulation of reasons given for choices for best liked and next best liked on 3,248 preference sheets.
2. Tabulation of reasons given for least liked and next least liked on the same 3,248 preference sheets.
3. Tabulation of reasons for best liked and next best liked on the 676 preference sheets used in the two resubmissions.
4. Tabulation of reasons for preference given in the 3,38 themes written to indicate choice in top twenty poems.
5. Tabulation of reasons given for first and second choices for preference in the prose study.
6. Evaluation of pupils' comments in interviews.
7. Analysis of ten discussions held with the ten classes included in the experiment.

It will be noted that the evidence drawn from the interviews and discussions differs rather widely from that obtained by the tabulations of reasons given by the children on preference sheets and in themes. As interviews were held with only slightly over 10 per cent of the children, the opinions expressed in them are, after all, the opinions

of these children. While they were selected on bases that made them as nearly as possible a representative sampling of the entire group, it is difficult to say that they were actually so in such a matter as poetry preference. The discussions were, even more than the interviews, expressions of individuals rather than of the group as a whole. While participation was very wide in all ten discussions and the children appeared to express themselves with entire freedom, it cannot be proved that these discussions followed the thinking of the group as a whole.

Because of this factor of minority influence, the discussion in this chapter will center on the reasons given for choices in the preference sheets and draw upon the interviews and discussions chiefly for illustrative material. Sheer weight of numbers should tend to make the evidence drawn from the preference sheets valuable in indicating children's tastes. Even a cursory examination of the first five sources of evidence indicates that there were available over seven thousand statements from the children themselves in regard to their likes and dislikes. Discussion of the reasons given in the themes and on the preference sheets used in the two resubmissions will, however, be reserved for the next chapter.

As the preference sheet included in the directions the suggestion that the child, if he did not know why he chose as he did, leave the blank for reason for choice empty, and as no pressure was brought to bear to see that these blanks were filled, it seems reasonable to assume that the statements of reason given were valid insofar as the child was able to analyze his own reactions. There was the further evidence that came from observation. Very clearly a large majority of the children were extremely conscientious about filling in the preference sheets. Their seriousness could be observed during the actual filling in. The check of the reasons afterward pointed in the same direction. Erasures, recastings of first statements, and added footnotes all indicated that they regarded their function as critics with considerable seriousness.

In evaluating children's statements in regard to their reasons for choosing as they did, the reason rather than the child was used as the unit of measurement. This was necessary because children frequently

gave two reasons for a choice. In such cases the only other solution would have been to throw out one reason, and this seemed unjustified as in all probability both reasons were equally valid to the child.

As individuals similarly qualified in training and experience might disagree on the classification of children's responses, it was judged advisable to select a series of typical child responses and use these as a basis for the formulation of headings for classifications on tabulation charts. A sufficient number of these responses will be given to make clear what the classification designates when it is not self-explanatory. If the tables of children's reasons for choices are read with these in mind, it will be possible to follow the implications without necessarily agreeing with the interpretation of the response. All tabulation of reasons was done either by the experimenter or by a college instructor in literature. These two persons, working jointly, developed the tabulation system already mentioned. The narrowing down of classifications for responses was simpler than might be assumed as there tended to be a high degree of similarity in these. It was decided that a middle ground must be found between a bewildering array of definitions and too few and too highly generalized classifications. The children's responses, upon which the definitions were based, will be given before any discussion is attempted of the implications of these responses. For ease of reference, these are divided into favorable and unfavorable.

FAVORABLE RESPONSES

No attempt was made to interpret such fairly objective statements of reasons for preference as *funny, short, or long*.

Responses that could not be classified under any head without an undue amount of interpretation were listed as meaningless. In a large number of cases the whole tone of the comment suggested that to the child it had some critical connotations. It seemed safer, however, not to attempt to interpret such comments. Responses classified as meaningless fell largely into the three groupings given below:

1. It is the kind of poem liked.
"I like poems like that."
"It is the kind of poem that appeals to me."
2. Repetition of subject matter.

"It (*The Little Lost Pup*) told how the forlorn pup got a good home and was very happy."

"It (*The Storekeeper*) tells what men do when they are old."

3. It is a good, nice, pleasant, or interesting poem.

"I think it is the best poem."

"It is a good poem."

"It is so interesting."

Such statements made up one-fifth of the reasons given for preference and over one-third of the reasons given for selections of poems for least liked. Such a high percentage of meaningless responses may seem startling until it is remembered that a large number of adults, some of them critics, give reasons for preferences that are hardly more valid.

After the responses classified as meaningless, the largest number of reasons fell under the heading of funny. These were simply listed as such.

Rhythm: All comments that indicated that a poem was preferred because of its rhythm were listed under this heading. Rhythm of a fairly obvious sort was clearly perceived as well as definitely responded to by a large number of the children in the experimental group. Their reasons for preference under this heading showed much greater discernment than did their reasons under any other heading that related to the techniques of poetry. Some of their reasons showed a high degree of perception; others indicated merely a general awareness. No attempt was made to differentiate on the basis of quality. Some child responses are given below.

"It (*Jazz Fantasia*) starts out full of action and then quiets down. It makes me think of music."

"The poem (*Spanish Waters*) reminds me of a bay with long, easy swells breaking on a shore in the moonlight. It has a sort of rhythm which makes you think of the surf all through the poem."

"It (*All Day I Hear*) has feeling. You can just hear the noises of the water. It sounds cold like winter."

Interesting Place, Person, or Subject: All comments that gave as their reason for preference the specific subject matter of the poem were

classified under this heading except those that referred to people or animals. These were listed separately as they seemed frequent enough to be so treated.

"It tells of things of old." (*Ballad of John Silver*)

"I like prairie stories." (*Buffalo*)

"It's about parades, and I like parades." (*Cavalier*)

Ethical Purpose: All comments that expressed preference for a poem because of its real or supposed ethical import, were classified under this heading. Many of these were given for poems not classified as didactic. Almost all were on a very simple experience level.

"It (*Little Homes*) reminds you that little homes are just as jolly as large city homes."

"It (*Broom*) brought out even if you are lazy you might get somewhere in this world."

"It (*Facts*) tells that cruelty kills."

True to Life: All comments that gave as a reason for preference that the content or idea of the poem corresponded to the child's own or observed experience were listed under this heading.

"It (*Those Two Boys*) is just like some boys in our classroom."

"It (*Stranger*) is how music soothes a person's mind."

"It (*Out of Work*) was so true—no imagination."

Story Interest: All comments that cited as a virtue in a poem that it was like a story were listed under this heading.

"It (*Lucinda Matlock*) tells a story in a little space and is interesting."

"It (*Gingham Umbrella*) has a complete ending and a story."

"I like the story in it." (*Little Lost Pup*)

Lively and Exciting: All comments that gave as a reason for preference the fact that a poem had action or movement in it were listed under this heading.

"It (*Ballad of John Silver*) sounded so bold."

"You get a lot of action in every phrase." (*Boots*)

"It (*Where Do the Gypsies Come From?*) has an exciting rhythm."

Rhyme: All comments that cited a satisfactory rhyme scheme as a reason for preference were listed under this heading. None is cited as they all tended in the same direction. They showed a preference for obvious rhyme schemes and in some cases indicated a preference for rhymed couplets.

Imagery: All comments that gave the quality of pictorial effects in a poem were listed under this heading. They represented imagery in only a very limited sense, but they did imply some feeling for images.

"You can close your eyes and just see the characters." (*John Brown*)

"It (*Apple Trees*) was put in a way that you could really see everything read."

"It (*Song of Wandering Aengus*) gives my mind the beautifulest of pictures."

Communication of Experience: All comments that implied that the reason for preference was based upon a sense of communicated experience were listed under this heading. These, next to the comments on rhythm, showed the nearest approach to an esthetic standard. They varied widely in quality. In some cases the response appeared to be evoked by the circumstance that the poem recalled a personal experience. In other cases a response seemed to indicate that the child was "inside" the poem and had experienced it in the impersonal way that is characteristic of an esthetic experience. These two levels were at first separated but were later treated as one as the number of borderline cases made the distinction too subtle for group analysis.

"When he played the fiddle I could almost see the blaze and hear the music." (*The Stranger*)

"It makes you feel as though you were the dog." (*The Little Lost Pup*)

"It makes you think you were there with the woodsmen by the fire. You can almost picture the red-hot stove." (*The Storekeeper*)

Way Written: All comments that gave some aspect of literary style as reason for preference were listed under this heading. These were all most elementary and indicated a groping after what was felt rather than any clear discernment of style.

"It sounds as if the boy himself were telling about his prized dog."
(*I've Got A Dog*)

"I like poems where there are comparisons." (*Those Two Boys*)

"It (*Eve*) has a foreboding tendency—it is rather mysterious—sweet."

About Animals: All comments that gave as a reason for preference the fact that a poem was about an animal were classified under this heading.

"I like this poem best of all because it is about an animal. Anything that is about animals in poems I like." (*Little Lost Pup*)

"I like stories about animals if they don't die." (*Little Lost Pup*)

"I like it because it was about animals." (*Summer Evening*)

About Nature: All comments that gave as a reason for preference the fact that a poem was descriptive of nature were classified under this heading.

"It (*Blessings on the Woods*) expresses my feeling—I love all wild nature."

"The person who wrote it saw all of the beauty in nature." (*Poem of Praise*)

"I try to be nature's friend." (*Nature's Friend*)

Amusing or Clever: All comments that indicated that preference was based on a feeling that a poem was playful, amusing, or clever were listed under this heading. It was differentiated from "funny" as the comments seemed to indicate a real distinction, especially in relation to the poems to which they were applied. However, the distinction may be, in part, one of vocabulary as no doubt many poems were called funny by children because they lacked the ability to express themselves more exactly.

"It (*Wine and Water*) relieves all the seriousness of the Bible story and makes it kind of gay and light and carefree. I believe if you read it it would cheer a person up."

"It would be rather impossible to remember an incident before you could talk—therefore it seems funny. It is so impossible." (*The Terrible Enfant*)

"It (*The Shark and the Flying Fish*) is silly and impossible."

Sad: All comments listed under this heading gave as a reason for preference the fact that a poem was sad, though sometimes with the variation that it was also interesting. Sad, like funny, appears to have been an absolute thing with these children and so needed no further definition. As a consequence, no comments are cited.

Quiet: All comments that gave as a reason for preference the fact that a poem was quiet were listed under this heading. The comments implied a liking for the gentle, hushed, or restrained.

"It (*Four Little Foxes*) sounds so soft as if they were asleep and it tells the way he sheltered them and took care of them."

"Because of its quiet procedure and human emotion." (*The Man He Killed*)

Imagination: All comments that indicated that preference was based upon a liking for the imaginative were listed under this heading.

"It would be so queer to see a buffalo with a handkerchief." (*The Buffalo*)

"It (*Wine and Water*) is like it was taken from a scene in *Green Pastures*.

"I enjoy poems that imagine quite a bit." (*Scythe Song*)

NEGATIVE RESPONSES

As the reasons for choosing a poem as least liked tended to be negative forms of the reasons for preference, the child responses will be listed under the appropriate heading without further definition except when the definitions are not suggested by the positive listings.

No examples of such objective listings as *Not Understood*, *Too Short*, and *Too Long* will be given as these are self-explanatory. It is highly possible that *Too Short*, rather than being a critical dictum, was closely related to *Not Understood*, as brief poems are frequently highly compressed and consequently difficult.

Dull or Sad: All comments that indicated that a poem was not liked because it was dull or sad were listed under this heading. The two qualities, though not necessarily related, were classified together because they were so frequently linked in the comments. Apparently the children regarded them as very similar.

"It is dry—no life—not jumpy enough, just still." (*All Day I Hear*)

"It speaks too much truth of the heartaches of today." (*Out of Work*)

"It puts me to sleep." (*Scythe Song*)

No Rhythm or Unsatisfactory Rhythm:

"I thought it should have more rhythm to it like the song Oh, Susanna. I was really disappointed in it." (*Old Susan*)

"It (*The Buffalo*) is ridiculous and doesn't have any pep or rhythm."

Lack of Story Interest:

"There is not much to understand. It's just something to read." (*Eve*)

"It has no story and I think every long poem should have a brief story." (*Laugh and Be Merry*)

No Rhyme or Type of Rhyme: Comments listed under this heading indicated a disapproval of the rhyme scheme used by the author. Most of the poems so criticized did not have obvious rhyme schemes. The children's comments are not listed as they simply imply disapproval.

Way Written:

"It hasn't anything you can look forward to—a surprise perhaps." (*Do You Fear the Wind?*)

"When you read it it seems like it isn't finished." (*The Rabbit*)

"It (*The Wayfarer*) didn't seem to stay to one idea."

Dislike of Subject:

"I don't like poems about God or any religious kinds." (*Blades of Grass*)

"I don't like poems of war but I do like stories of war." (*Cavalier*)

"Girls don't care so much about murder but it sounds like our times today." (*The Man He Killed*)

Negative Response, Physical or Esthetic: Comments that indicated that poems were not liked because they called forth a negative response were listed under this heading. In many cases such responses seemed to bear only a lateral relation to the poem in question; they were related, rather, to the individual's personal experience.

"I know it is true and I don't like to read about it." (*Cant*)

"I hate dreams." (*Dream Pedlary*)

"It is so gloomy and murky." (*Fog*)

Impossible: Comments that gave as a reason for not liking a poem the fact that it did not correspond to observed reality were listed under this heading.

"It (*The Buffalo*) is just too simple—too silly for words—a buffalo needing a handkerchief is ridiculous."

"The thought of the leaves as ladies at a ball doesn't seem much like leaves." (*Glimpse in Autumn*)

"I don't think people could live in one place without seeing somebody." (*The Stranger*)

Repetition: All comments that gave as a reason for not liking a poem the fact that it repeated words, phrases, or lines were listed under this heading. Such comments centered on poems in the obvious sound subdivision, especially *Stranger*, *Boots*, *Tarantella* and *Broom*. These reasons are not cited as all merely suggest that the writers do not like repetition.

Ethical Purpose:

"It sounds like it was so true and that it shouldn't have happened." (*The Man He Killed*)

"I think it is rude. After all politicians aren't so bad." (*The Politician*)

"It's an insult to any Indian." (*The Buffalo*)

Too Imaginative:

"It seems to me that the person is only dreaming this—says it but does not mean what he says." (*Tarry Buccaneer*)

"It's exaggerated too much." (*The Shark and the Flying Fish*)

"Nothing but imagination." (*The Wayfarer*)

Too Loud and Noisy:

"It (*Cavalier*) has too many noises in it."

"It (*Jazz Fantasia*) is too loud."

"It (*Jazz Fantasia*) is too noisy."

Too Much Description: All comments that gave as a reason for not liking a poem the fact that it was merely descriptive were listed

under this heading. Most of these were on pure nature poems. Actual comments are not cited as they do not go beyond mere statement of dislike for description, especially of trees, flowers, and gardens.

If the children's comments are referred to as Table 14 given below and Table 15 on page 118 are examined, a fairly clear picture can be obtained of their own interpretations of their reactions to poetry. To what extent they were able to determine their reasons for choosing

TABLE 14
REASONS GIVEN BY EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR CHOICES OF POEMS
FOR BEST LIKED OR NEXT BEST LIKED

Reasons*	REASONS OF BOYS AND GIRLS		BOYS' REASONS ONLY		GIRLS' REASONS ONLY	
	N = 3,944	Per Cent	N = 1,685	Per Cent	N = 2,259	Per Cent
Funny	851	21.6	388	23.0	463	20.5
Rhythm	367	9.3	161	9.6	206	9.1
Imagery	318	8.1	71	4.2	247	10.9
Ethical Purpose	288	7.3	133	7.9	155	6.9
True to Life	273	6.9	118	7.0	155	6.9
Interesting Place or People	250	6.3	141	8.4	109	4.8
Story Interest	248	6.3	108	6.4	140	6.2
Rhyme	224	5.7	94	5.6	130	5.8
Lively or Exciting	174	4.4	98	5.8	76	3.4
Communication of Experience	161	4.1	65	3.9	96	4.2
About Animals	157	4.0	59	3.5	98	4.3
Way Written	136	3.4	62	3.7	74	3.3
About Nature	131	3.3	49	2.9	82	3.6
Amusing or Clever	116	2.9	40	2.4	76	3.4
Short	59	1.5	30	1.8	29	1.3
Easily Understood	54	1.4	17	1.0	37	1.6
Long	40	1.0	23	1.4	17	0.8
Sad	33	0.8	8	0.5	25	1.1
Quiet	29	0.7	5	0.3	24	1.1
Imaginative	19	0.5	2	0.1	17	0.8
About People	16	0.4	13	0.8	3	0.1

* Percentages are based on the 3,944 meaningful reasons only. Of the 4,989 reasons stated, 20.9 per cent of those of the total group were meaningless; 23.9 per cent for the boys; 18.7 per cent for the girls. Of the blanks provided for reasons, 1,559 were not filled out.

as they did can be estimated to a certain extent by a comparison of reasons given with actual choices made. That a large number could not tell why they liked a poem is indicated by the fact that of the 6,496 possible opportunities for expression of reasons for preference, 1,569 were not used. In the case of poems that were not liked, even a smaller proportion of reasons were stated. In these, 2,807 of the 6,496 blanks were not filled out. When the large number of reasons that had to be classified as meaningless are added, it becomes clear that in only about 60 per cent of the cases in choices for either best liked or next best liked and in about 38 per cent of the choices for least liked or next least liked, was there clear evidence as to how the children interpreted their own choices. An examination of these meaningful reasons does, however, give some definite clues to children's responses to poetry.

If Tables 14 and 15 are compared, certain similarities in general implications can be observed. Some of the more significant of these are as follows:

1. Simplicity was an extremely important factor in influencing preferences. In the reasons stated for selecting a poem as least liked or next least liked a failure to understand was operative in almost a fourth of the choices. It is highly possible that it influenced even a larger number of choices as certain other comments, notably those that gave as a reason the fact that a poem was too short, may have had a comprehension difficulty as the true reason. As the poems included in the experimental material presented no greater problems in comprehension than poetry commonly used at the junior high school level, it appears that children prefer material that is below what is ordinarily thought to be their comprehension level. The fact that simplicity was not given frequently as a reason for preference does not run counter to this as it is unlikely that the question of comprehension would appear significant to a child when he understood the poem. Its other qualities would attract him and therefore appear in his reason for choice. The importance of simplicity as a factor in preference is also borne out by the nature of the poems that ranked high. All of these present few difficulties in the matter of comprehension.

2. Specific subject matter was definitely important as a factor in

TABLE 15

REASONS GIVEN BY EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN FOR CHOICES OF POEMS
FOR LEAST LIKED OR NEXT LEAST LIKED

Reasons*	REASONS OF BOYS AND GIRLS		BOYS' REASONS ONLY		GIRLS' REASONS ONLY	
	N = 2,484	Per Cent	N = 1,032	Per Cent	N = 1,452	Per Cent
Not Understood	609	24.5	213	20.6	396	27.3
Dull or Sad	379	15.3	183	17.7	196	13.5
Too Short	336	13.5	156	15.1	180	12.4
Unsatisfactory Rhythm	197	7.9	107	10.4	90	6.2
No Story Interest	154	6.2	68	6.6	86	5.9
Unsatisfactory Rhyme	150	6.0	56	5.4	94	6.5
Way Written	146	5.9	68	6.6	78	5.4
Dislike of Subject	140	5.6	52	5.0	88	6.1
Negative Response, Physical or Esthetic	126	5.1	40	3.8	86	5.9
Impossible	94	3.8	21	2.1	73	5.0
Repetition	51	2.1	17	1.6	34	2.3
Ethical Import	46	1.9	21	2.1	25	1.7
Too Long	21	0.8	16	1.6	5	0.3
Too Imaginative	13	0.5	5	0.5	8	0.1
Too Loud and Noisy	11	0.4	0	0	11	0.6
Too Much Description	11	0.4	9	0.9	2	0.8

* Percentages for reasons are based on meaningful responses only. In all, 3,663 responses were given. Of these, 2,484 were meaningful and 1,279 were meaningless. The percentages of meaningless responses were: total, 34.0 per cent; boys, 36.1 per cent; girls, 32.4 per cent. In 2,807 cases no reasons were stated.

influencing choices. Over 14 per cent of all reasons given for preference were classifiable under some type of subject matter appeal. The comments that gave subject matter as a reason for dislike, though fewer in number, were likewise indicative. Apparently what a poem was about was of primary significance to these children. All comments under this heading, whether for like or dislike, indicated that their range of interests was rather narrow but their tastes within this range extremely definite.

3. Story interest was fairly significant as an influence on choices. It was probably more operative than the actual percentages in Tables 14 and 15 seem to indicate, as in many cases it was closely related to

subject matter. If a poem contained, in addition to story interest, action, dialogue, suspense, or the use of contrast, its chances of being preferred were definitely increased.

4. Rhythm of the marked and highly predictable sort was definitely important in influencing choices. These children apparently both looked for pronounced rhythm in poetry and, with a few exceptions, responded to it positively.

5. The use of a rhyme scheme that was clear and easily identifiable was a factor in determining preferences. All comments that gave rhyme as reason for choice suggested that there was a definite expectation in this direction.

6. Approval or disapproval of the ethical import of a poem influenced opinion in regard to it. This was true even of poems that were not in any sense didactic. It was due in many cases to an over literal interpretation of the poem.

7. The tastes of a small minority ran counter to the tastes of the majority. This can be seen by noting that reasons given for preference in Table 14, but represented by relatively few choices, appear as reasons for not liking in Table 15. That a poem was sad, quiet, or imaginative was a defect in it in the opinion of the majority but a virtue in the opinion of the minority.

Besides the evidence drawn from statements of reasons for choices, there remains a considerable body of material in footnotes added by the children at the bottom of preference sheets, and in reports of interviews and discussions. Evidence of this kind must be presented in discussion as its nature is such that it cannot be given in tabular form. All of it tends in the direction suggested by Tables 14 and 15.

The footnotes added by the children themselves, while too few to be substantial as evidence, do indicate the nature of opinion. Some of these related in general to an attitude toward poetry and in particular to the poetry included in the experimental material. These varied from the complete disapproval of one overage boy who relentlessly wrote on the bottom of all his preference sheets, "I don't like no poems," to the moderate approval of one girl who wrote, "Most of the poems were good because they were not old-fashioned and lifeless," and the

complete approval of a boy whose comment was, "They are all so good it's hard to pick."

As the children had been told that the purpose of the experiment was to discover the poetry interests of boys and girls, many of the footnotes contained suggestions in regard to their opinion of what constituted suitable and unsuitable material. Some of these will be quoted as they furnish a commentary on Tables 14 and 15.

From the boys came these comments that tend to confirm their relatively low ranking of nature poems and their high ranking of poems that deal with movement or action.

"I think that if the poems were about people more than about spring or trees and things like that we would enjoy them more."

"I wish you would have poems like the *Charge of the Light Brigade* and *On the Road to Mandalay*."

In contradiction came these suggestions, likewise from boys.

"I have loved animals and forest life ever since I was born. I want to be a naturalist."

"I'd like to have more poems about animals and foxes and trees and bodies of water and flowers. In short, nature!"

With the girls, as with the boys, there tended to be a majority and a minority opinion and expressions of these appeared in the footnotes. With the girls, majority opinion was clearly against the inclusion in poetry of anything that was horrible or even mildly unpleasant. Their ethical approval was reserved for the uplift type of poem that tended to portray the bright and cheerful side of life. The minority opinion was, however, in favor of the inclusion of the shocking when it served an ethical purpose. The quotations indicate these points of view.

"The poems about war are all right but I think they are too blood-curdling."

"If more poems like *The Man He Killed* and *The Unpardonable Sin* were printed maybe we wouldn't have so many wars and quarrels with other countries."

The indication from the choices made that the majority of the children tended to prefer poems below their grade level receives some confirmation from two footnotes from the girls, quoted below.

"All poems with talking in them are very good. Most children like them best."

"Two of my favorite poems are *Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee* and *The Mysterious Cat*."

The interviews, on the whole, added little that had not been expressed on the preference sheets. They did, however, clarify certain points and help to formulate the criteria that the children tended to apply to poetry. As the thirty-six children who were interviewed had been selected on the basis of representative sampling, there was a fairly wide range of ability in the group. There appeared to be little observable difference in direction of tastes between children of low, average, and high ability, but there was a marked difference in the power to formulate reasons for preference. The boys of the upper group seemed both articulate and discriminating in their discussion of poetry in the interviews. They seemed definitely aware of the simpler aspects of the techniques of poetry and drew freely upon their outside reading or upon the poems used in the experiment for illustrative material. Both boys and girls of the upper group tended to go beyond mere statement of preferences for individual poems and to seek to find the elements that had appealed to them, while the children of the lower group seemed content to list subjects that interested them and to name poems that they had enjoyed.

The discussions performed the function of bringing to a focus the various points of view that had been expressed in the preference sheets. It was this, rather than the addition of new material, that made them valuable. In every case they clearly confirmed the main outlines suggested in Tables 14 and 15.

The method used in the discussion was to suggest that the class cooperate in compiling an anthology of poems that boys and girls like themselves would really enjoy. This brought forth an immediate and widespread response. Poems were suggested for inclusion. The first titles suggested were invariably those that had ranked very high. To these there was no objection as all the poems mentioned were popular ones. Then suggestions were made of poems that had caused disagreement in the group or poems that had not been generally liked. This drew the discussion around to differences in poetry and differences

in taste. This naturally suggested a division of the anthology into sections so that poems that were similar in appeal could be grouped together. The question then arose as to what sections should be included if differences in tastes were to be provided for and still no poems included that were not really interesting to boys and girls. The sections spontaneously suggested included ones for adventure poems, story poems, funny poems, jolly poems, poems about animals, and nature poems.

As the discussion progressed it was possible to see to what extent the children recognized similarities in poems other than the obvious similarity of subject matter. When the suggestion was made that they select for the divisions of the book the poems that had been included in the experiment, they tended to group poems under the same headings as those used for the subdivisions. The poems in the obvious sound effect were most quickly noted as similar. In one discussion six of the ten were listed within a few minutes. The humorous poems and likewise the didactic were easily identified as poems that were funny and poems that taught a lesson. As was natural, the poems classified as imagery and as nature without a center of interest were all grouped together as nature poems.

As various poems were suggested for inclusion, objections were raised and the merits of the poems in question discussed. In this way the criteria that the children themselves applied became increasingly definite. In some cases, at the request of the children, a poem under discussion was read aloud by the reader so that its qualities could be noted. Differences in tastes in the group could be seen as they could be seen in the tabulation of the reasons on preference sheets. Nature poems were vigorously defended by the minority but were declared by the majority to be "dull" or "slow." The comment of one boy that such poems "just drag along and are about trees and rocks and things like that" apparently expressed the opinion of a large number of the children for when, in one instance, a show of hands was asked for to see how many did not like what they called "scenery" poems, fifteen of the thirty-five children present raised their hands.

Elements present in some of the poems used seemed in the discussions, as in the preference sheets, to tend toward arousing a contro-

versial attitude. Repetition, a surprise ending, and a high degree of compression in expression were of this nature. To a number of the children a recurring refrain or other repetitive element was "just a bunch of words" put in, apparently, because the poet's powers of invention had failed him. To others it was an outstanding charm. When the experiment was tried of reading *The Stranger* without the refrain, one boy, a defender of repetition, exclaimed, "But it makes it seem gayer when you put it in." Compression troubled some children who declared that they preferred stories to poems because stories explained more and you didn't have to concentrate so much. One boy asked, "Why do they make poems so short? You can't get on to them because they end before you get into them."

The discussions confirmed the evidence of the preference sheets that a large majority of the children reacted negatively to "dreary" poems. One girl, in commenting on *Groundswell*, said, "A poem like that makes us want to break down and feel sad. It is kind of dreary and lonesome and everything else." Another girl made as a positive requirement that a poem "ought to paint a pleasant picture." This attitude was clearly more common with the girls than with the boys.

There was also evidence in the discussions as well as in the interviews that the children responded positively to poems that gave them a feeling of homely comfort, of security, and well being. Comments on such poems as *Autumn* and *The Storekeeper* indicated that this response was different from the response to poems they called jolly, though it was undoubtedly related to it. The pictures in *Autumn* of the mother busy preparing for the winter and in *The Storekeeper* of the men warming themselves by the stove in the country store were congenial to the children.

Perhaps the most significant parts of the discussions were those that bore on the techniques of poetry. The reasons for choices given on the preference sheets had suggested that a fair number of the children had some feeling for form in poetry as well as content. Comments offered in the interviews had pointed in the same direction. The discussions made it perfectly clear that the feeling for form was fairly general. The aspects of poetry that were perceived with varying degrees of clearness were rhythm, rhyme, condensed expression, direct

communication of experience, and alliteration. Except for rhythm and rhyme, none of these was mentioned by name, but all were clearly implied by the comments made and the illustrations given.

Rhythm was clearly distinguished by all the children who expressed themselves. Comments on this aspect of poetry tended to center with the majority on poems that had heavily accented rhythm patterns or repetitive effects. These comments did suggest, however, that the children recognized that variations in rhythm patterns resulted in quite different effects in poetry. Even children who disliked *Boots* recognized the implications of its rhythm. Comments are quoted from different group discussions to illustrate the definiteness and variety of responses to the insistent rhythm of *Boots*. One girl who did not like the poem said, "It just seemed like it was *so* that they were walking through the mud. The words tell it all right, but it sounds like the soldiers are marching and they are tired and they are walking through the mud and are cold and just seem miserable." A boy remarked that, "The rhythm of *Boots* is that of marching and you can feel it." Another boy, in comparing *Boots* to other poems under discussion, said, "*Boots* has a steady rhythm and others had more of a song-like rhythm."

There was ample evidence to prove that rhythm was definitely attractive to a large number of the children, though there were likewise some indications that too heavily stressed beats, especially when repeated without variation, were annoying to a few. There was also evidence to suggest that the children enjoyed alternations in tempo. Comments on this fell rather heavily on two well-liked poems, *Jazz Fantasia* and *Tarantella*, in which this technique is used. One girl, in discussing *Tarantella*, remarked, "It went slowly and then fast. I like where it goes fast." One child explained rhythm by saying it was like time in music. There were comments also on slow, smooth rhythms, fast rhythms, and "jerky" rhythms.

Rhyme was regarded as an essential of poetry by only a small number of the children. When one boy expressed an opinion that showed that he regarded poetry and rhyme as practically synonymous terms, he was immediately corrected by others in the group who pointed out to him that some of the poems in the experimental material did not

have rhyme. The discussion in this class and in other classes as well showed plainly that the majority of the children distinguished clearly between rhythm and rhyme and were definitely aware of the fact that rhyme was not essential to poetry. A minority, however, seemed troubled by the idea that poetry need not rhyme. One boy explained that he didn't like to read poetry that didn't rhyme because he always "tried to make it rhyme" whether or not it was supposed to rhyme.

There was no evidence in any of the discussions that the children were aware of anything but the most obvious type of rhyme. The majority seemed to regard rhymes that "clicked" as outstandingly meritorious in poetry. This is hardly surprising, however, as even the superior college students used by Richards¹ in his experiment showed an exaggerated respect for rhyming ability and failed to respect partial rhyme as intentional. Like the children in this study, they too had the notion that great regularity was a merit in poetry.

In every discussion, from some child came the comment that poems did not merely describe as books sometimes did, but gave the reader the experience. In one fashion or another the idea of communication of experience was expressed. Very frequently it came up in defense of poetry as against prose. In one case a girl who had expressed a preference for stories said, "I think more people would read more if they were in story form. People don't read poetry so much." In reply to this a boy who was an ardent defender of poetry answered, "But poems make you feel like the people in the poems feel, I think."

Taken as a whole, the discussions indicated that the children had definite if rudimentary standards of criticism. In some cases they fell into the common error of trying to apply external standards to a poem and failed to appreciate it because they had approached it with preconceived critical misconceptions. They looked for identifiable elements and were disappointed if these were absent.

¹ I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 34. 1929.

CHAPTER XII

Characteristics of Well-Liked Poetry

AS THE purpose of the study was to discover what interest elements in poetry children of junior high school age responded to positively, a process of sifting of material was used. For this reason a series of resubmissions of poems well liked in their original experimental period was employed. As it seemed clear that the percentage of choices for preference received by any poem on the day on which it was presented would be affected by the relative attractiveness of the other poems with which it was put into competition, it seemed desirable to re-group the well-liked poems and obtain judgment on them in this new situation. In the resubmissions no attempt was made to follow the pattern of organization of material used in the original experimental periods. This could not be done without defeating the purpose of the resubmissions, which was to put all high ranking poems into competition with each other. When a high degree of preference was used as the criterion, poems in the less popular subdivision could not be included.

It was assumed that if child preference and adult judgment could be combined in evaluating high-ranking poems, some extremely useful information could be obtained. Trained adult judgment had been employed in the original classification of the poems into the categories and subdivisions. This had been done with the complete recognition on the part of all concerned that such classification represented, not final judgment on all the possible appeals present in the poems so classified, but rather a determination of their outstanding central effect. It seemed desirable, therefore, to enlist the aid of adult judgment at the close of the experiment for a more detailed analysis of poems that seemed indicative of child preference. In this way it would be possible to go beyond the central effect that had determined the original classification of the poem and discover what cluster of interest

elements present in a poem had caused it to be preferred. As it seemed quite as important to discover what characteristics in a poem caused it to fail to be preferred as those that caused it to be preferred, a diagnosis of poems that had fallen to the bottom in ranking was also undertaken. In this way it should be possible to compare the ends of the distribution and discover what qualities that were present in well-liked poems were absent in little-liked poems.

The two methods used to arrive at a knowledge of what interest elements were operative with children were the resubmissions, with consideration in these of both actual choices made and reasons given for choices, whether on preference sheets or in themes, and adult judgment on poems that were either extremely well liked or very little liked. The children's choices and their reasons for these will be presented first as the analyses of the judges must be considered in the light of these.

As the selection and organization of the material used for the three resubmissions has been discussed in some detail in an earlier chapter, it will suffice here to recall the general outline of this procedure. The two top ranking poems from each of the first five experimental periods were resubmitted as a group of ten on the sixth experimental period. The second group of ten best-liked poems for the second resubmission were selected in a similar fashion, the material in the last five experimental periods being used. In the third resubmission, twenty poems, composed of the two previous sets of ten, were presented. In this final resubmission the poems were not read to the children as the poems included had already been heard twice. The children were simply given copies of all twenty poems and asked to select the one they liked best and write a theme on it, telling as well as they could why they preferred it.

The effect of putting into comparison poems that are all definitely liked can be seen if Table 16 on page 128 is examined. A check of the rankings of the poems suggests the following conclusions:

1. The rankings for the total group in the first column are reasonably consistent as no poem chosen as one of the top two for its period fell below thirty in its ranking in the whole 120 poems and only three poems fell below the twentieth rank. The rankings for

TABLE 16
POETRY PREFERENCES OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN AS INDICATED BY THE RANKING OF TWENTY POEMS IN
THEIR ORIGINAL PERIOD AND IN TWO TYPES OF RESUBMISSIONS

Category	Title of Poem	FOR TOTAL GROUP				FOR BOYS				FOR GIRLS			
		Original Period ^a	First Resub- mission ^b	Final Resub- mission ^c	Original Period	First Resub- mission	Final Resub- mission	Original Period	First Resub- mission	Final Resub- mission	Original Period	First Resub- mission	Final Resub- mission
S.a*	Little Lost Pup	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1
SE.a	Simon Legree	2	2	2.5	5	3.5	5.5	1	1	1	1	1	2
H.b	Epitaph on a Politician	3	6	12	3	7	13	5	4	5	5	4	11
SE.a	Broom	4	4	16	6	6	17.5	4	5	5	7	5	15
D.a*	Those Two Boys	5	8	4	4	8	3.5	7	6.5	6.5	11	3	5
S.a*	I've Got a Dog	6	3	2.5	2	2	2	2	2	2	11	3	3
H.a*	Wine and Water	7	17	13.5	7	17	13	9	17	13	9	17	15
N.a	Horse	8	16	18	13	11.5	17.5	6	16	13	6	16	13
S.a	Storekeeper	9	14	11	10	14	10	8	12	9	8	12	9
S.b*	Ballad of John Silver	10	15	6	31	18.5	10	2	9	2	10	9	5.5
H.a	The Big Baboon	11	11	19.5	15.5	15	17.5	10	8	10	10	8	19.5
H.b*	A Terrible Infant	12	12	13.5	8	9	13	23	15	15	23	15	15
D.a	Out of Work	13	7	10	14	5	10	13	10	10	13	10	8
H.a*	The Ambitious Haddock	15	19	16	22	18.5	17.5	15	19	15	15	19	15
SE.a*	Stranger	16	10	9	9	10	5.5	38	14	11	38	14	11
I.a	Autumn	17	5	7	11	3.5	3.5	32	12	12	32	12	11
SE.a*	Jazz Fantasia	19	13	8	17	13	7.5	22	12	12	22	12	7
S.b*	Spanish Waters	26	9	5	42	11.5	7.5	20	6.5	6.5	20	6.5	4
D.a	Hem and Haw	28.5	20	19.5	29.5	20	17.5	30.5	18	18	30.5	18	19.5
D.a	Lucinda Matlock	30	18	16	21	19	17.5	36	20	20	36	20	15

^a Rank is based upon percentage of first plus second choices received by a poem in its own experimental period.

^b Rank is based upon first plus second choices received by a poem on the day in which it was resubmitted. Choices equal twice the attendance. Attendance at first resubmission was 340; boys, 159; girls, 181; at second resubmission, attendance was 336; boys, 161; girls, 175.

^c Rank is based on first choices only made from the group of twenty poems. Attendance was 338; boys, 161; girls, 177.

* Indicates poem read during the first five days. These poems constituted the group used in the first resubmission.

boys and girls are less satisfactory. This is due, in a large part, to sex differences as two of the three poems that fell below thirty had critical ratios of four or more when boys' and girls' percentages for preference were compared.

2. There is a considerable shift in rank when well-liked poems are put into competition with one another. This, as would be expected, is more apparent in the poems that fall into the middle positions in the top group for preference. The outstandingly popular poems retain their lead.

3. There seems to be some evidence to suggest that the boys and girls tended to agree more closely in choices made in the resubmissions than they did in the original experimental periods. If the boys' and girls' ranks in the second situation are compared to the ranks in the first situation, as these appear in Table 16, this greater agreement can be noted in at least eleven of the twenty poems.

4. It is highly possible that the rank position of certain poems in the third situation was affected by the related facts that only one choice was made and that this choice involved writing a theme. This is suggested by the marked decline in rank, for both boys and girls, of *Epitaph on a Politician*. The sharp drop in the boys' rank for *The Big Baboon* points in the same direction. Such poems were obviously difficult to discuss in a theme. The upward shift of rank in the third situation of such poems as *The Ballad of John Silver*, *Stranger*, and *Spanish Waters*, suggests that choices may have been affected by the fact that children, who incline in written discussion of literary material toward a mere repetition of subject matter, may have directed their choices toward poems that contained a story element as these presented fewer difficulties as theme topics. For this reason, rankings in this final resubmission may be less indicative than rankings based on choices in the original experimental periods or on choices made in the first two resubmissions.

The children's reasons for choices in the first and second resubmissions are presented in Table 17. The reasons given for choices in the third resubmission appear in Table 18. Despite the fact that reasons for choices given were on the same twenty poems in this last situation,

it seemed advisable to treat these separately as the use of the theme as a means of expression of preference did appear to narrow the choices and so make the results logically not comparable. In the treatment of these reasons, the same method was used as that employed in the treatment of reasons given in the preference sheets used in the original experimental periods. As the basis of classification has already been given in detail in Chapter XII, it will not be repeated here.

In the resubmissions, as in the original presentations, a number of

TABLE 17
POETRY INTERESTS OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN AS INDICATED BY
STATEMENTS OF REASONS FOR PREFERENCE IN GROUP OF
TWENTY WELL-LIKED POEMS

Reasons for Preference	SCORE			PER CENT		
	Reasons* of Total Group (1,254)	Boys' Reasons (527)	Girls' Reasons (727)	Reasons of Total Group	Boys' Reasons	Girls' Reasons
Funny	332	154	178	26.5	29.2	24.5
About Animals	125	51	74	10.0	9.7	10.2
True to Life	119	35	84	9.5	6.6	11.6
Ethical Import	100	50	50	8.0	9.5	6.9
Tells a Story	83	35	48	6.6	6.6	6.6
Rhyme	80	34	46	6.4	6.5	6.3
Rhythm	76	30	46	6.1	5.7	6.3
Imagery	67	13	54	5.3	2.5	7.4
Interesting Races, People, or Subject	58	47	11	4.6	8.9	1.5
Amusing or Clever	53	11	42	4.2	2.1	5.8
Communication of Expe- rience	43	17	26	3.4	3.2	3.6
Way Written	31	12	19	2.5	2.3	2.6
Lively or Exciting	28	17	11	2.2	3.2	1.5
Short	17	6	11	1.4	1.1	1.5
Easily Understood	13	3	10	1.0	0.6	1.4
Long	12	8	4	1.0	1.5	0.6
Sad	12	1	11	1.0	0.2	1.5
Nature	3	3	0	0.2	0.6	0
Quiet	2	0	2	0.1	0	0.2

* Reasons were stated on preference sheets in the two resubmissions as in the original experimental periods. The resubmissions are treated together.

children gave no reasons for their choices and an additional number gave reasons that had to be classified as meaningless. In these, however, the percentage of both was markedly smaller as apparently the children found it relatively easy to state a reason for choice when a poem was definitely well liked. As 340 children were present at the first resubmission and 336 at the second, and two choices with reasons for these were provided for on the preference sheets used, a total of 1,352 reasons would be implied. However, only 1,254 reasons could be classified as meaningful.

If Table 17 is compared to Table 14 on page 116, it will be noted that reasons given in both tables follow a similar pattern. If it is considered that Table 14 is based on all 120 poems and Table 16 on only the top twenty, this high degree of similarity is significant. It suggests that the children tended to look for certain qualities in poems and approve of them when found. The differences in percentages for preference are accounted for by two factors: the narrowing of number of appeals in the twenty poems, which had the effect of throwing into relief certain qualities markedly present, and the greater influence of majority opinion in Table 17 than in Table 14. As the reasons given in Table 17 were for choices on poems that represented the best in terms of mass judgment, it is natural that the percentage of reasons for choice should increase for the first three classifications as these represented widely popular appeals. That a piece of literature was funny, had an animal character, or seemed true to life was adequate reason for preference with the majority of these children regardless of whether the form were prose or poetry. The findings of the prose study amply confirmed this.

If Table 18 on page 132 is examined, it will be noted that while this table follows the main pattern of both Table 14 on page 116 and Table 17 on page 130, there are some fairly pronounced differences in emphasis. In the treatment of the themes, the reason rather than the child was used as the unit of measurement. This was necessary as in some cases more than one reason was emphasized and there seemed no practical way of determining which reason was paramount in the child's mind. It will be noted that, while only 338 themes were written, 539 meaningful reasons are classified. This rather large num-

TABLE 18

POETRY INTERESTS OF EIGHTH GRADE CHILDREN AS INDICATED BY
REASONS STATED IN THEMES FOR CHOICES OF BEST LIKED POEMS

Reason for Preference	NUMBER			PER CENT		
	Reasons* for Choice			Reasons for Choice		
	Total Group N = 539	Boys N = 250	Girls N = 289	Total Group N = 539	Boys N = 250	Girls N = 289
Subject Matter	94	45	49	17.4	18.0	17.0
True to Experience	63	28	35	11.7	11.2	12.1
Imagery	51	15	36	9.5	6.0	12.4
Way Written	39	21	18	7.2	8.4	6.2
Rhyme	37	24	13	6.9	9.6	4.5
Rhythm	34	18	16	6.3	7.2	5.5
Ethical Import	34	10	24	6.3	4.0	8.3
Relates to Own Experi- ence	33	15	18	6.1	6.0	6.2
Humor	30	18	12	5.6	7.2	4.2
Has Story	21	13	8	3.9	5.2	2.8
Communication of Expe- rience	20	6	14	3.7	2.4	4.8
Sustains Interest	20	8	12	3.7	3.2	4.2
Sad	15	3	12	2.8	1.2	4.2
Has Dialogue	15	5	10	2.8	2.0	3.5
Action or Adventure	14	11	3	2.6	4.4	1.0
Lively	7	2	5	1.3	0.8	1.7
Easy to Understand	5	1	4	0.9	0.4	1.4
Good Length	4	4	0	0.7	1.6	0
Pleasant	3	3	0	0.6	1.2	0

* In this, the reason, not the child, is taken as the unit of measurement. Number means, therefore, not number of children but number of reasons.

ber of responses indicates that in the themes the children tended to go a little more thoroughly into the nature of the poems than they had on the preference sheets. The attitude in these was, on the whole, that of defending a choice.

If the percentages in Table 18 are noted, it will be seen that two classifications, *Subject Matter* and *True to Experience*, receive more emphasis than they do in Tables 14 and 17. This was due to the fact that the children tended to develop at some length the reason for their

liking for the particular subject matter used in the poem and cite instances from their own or observed experience to prove that its treatment in the poem corresponded with such experience. Separate classifications of different types of subject matter were not made on the themes as the variety was too great to be conveniently tabulated.

One classification, not included in the classification of reasons given on the preference sheets, appears in Table 18. This, *Relates to Own Experience*, was included in the treatment of the themes as the theme form tended toward a projection of self into the discussion of the poem chosen. A child who chose to write on *Out of Work* would praise the poem for being true to life and then add the comment that his father had been out of work and that that was how his father had felt. Or a child who wrote on *The Little Lost Pup* would say that he had a dog and that his dog behaved just as the little pup in the poem behaved. Such comments were frequent enough to suggest that an attitude toward a poem might be influenced by purely extrinsic factors. That this is true of adults as well as of children is suggested by the frequency with which the college students used by I. A. Richards¹ in his study of poetry included in their estimate of a poem a reference to circumstances in their own lives, circumstances that had undoubtedly colored their reaction to the poem in question but which bore no discernible relation to it.

A comparison of Tables 14, 15, 17, and 18 gives a very fair picture of how the children interpreted their own responses to poetry. These tables, if examined in conjunction with Table 9, pages 75 to 78, in which the rankings of all poems appear, will indicate to what extent the children were able to interpret their own choices.

As it seemed desirable to narrow down the problem of what qualities in poetry were definitely appealing to junior high school children, forty of the poems used in the experiment, the twenty best liked and the twenty least liked, were submitted to trained adult judgment. For this, five persons recommended by Dr. Allan Abbott, Professor of English, Teachers College, were employed. Three of these judges are teachers at the college level, one is a teacher in New York City, and the fifth a graduate student. All are interested readers of poetry.

¹ I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 109. 1929.

In order to bring about some similarity of critical approach, all judges were provided with a chart that contained, besides the title of the poems, provision for marking nineteen characteristics commonly present in poetry. However, the judges were instructed to add other headings to their charts if, in their opinion, these seemed desirable.

A simple rating scale of 1 and 2 was used, 1 to indicate the clear presence and 2 to indicate the marked presence of the characteristic in the poem under consideration. In order to classify the headings on the chart, as these were necessarily brief, a typed list of fairly detailed definitions of characteristics used in the chart was furnished each judge. The judges were instructed to read the poems through and mark the chart in the light of their reading. They were asked to ignore the fact that the material had been presented to children and to judge the poems simply as poems. If they had been asked to rate the poems in the light of how children might react to them, an additional element of judgment would have been introduced that might have resulted in clouding the issue. It seemed advisable to obtain the judgment of trained adults and use this as a means of discovering the characteristics present in poetry that appealed to children. The actual choices of the children indicated their preferences. The opinion of the judges should help to reveal what had influenced these preferences.

When the judges' charts were returned, the results were tabulated and transferred to a chart that represented the consensus of opinion. For this, the standard held to was a four out of five agreement. In many cases, however, when the characteristic was markedly present in a poem, the agreement was unanimous. The number of characteristics was reduced from nineteen to fourteen, as only in these fourteen was there sufficient agreement to warrant their inclusion.

The last three poems in the top twenty submitted to the judges were not the same as the last three used in the resubmissions in the experiment. This discrepancy is due to the fact that the poems used in the resubmissions were the top two from each experimental period. When all 120 poems were ranked, three of the poems used in resubmissions fell below the twentieth rank. It seemed desirable to present to the judges the twenty top poems even though three of these had not appeared in the resubmissions.

In Figure V on page 136 appear the twenty best liked and the twenty least liked poems of the 120 used in the experiment with the judges' decision in regard to characteristics present in them. This material is presented in graphic rather than tabular form as this form of presentation tends to emphasize the clusters of characteristics present in well-liked poems. The black squares indicate the presence in a poem of the characteristic used in the heading.

If Figure V is examined, patterns for well-liked poems can be discerned. It will be noted, for instance, that certain characteristics have high positive values, others have almost no positive value, and some have what might be called a negative value. It will be noted, likewise, that groupings of characteristics are significant as determinants of choice.

If Tables 15, 17, and 18 on pages 118, and 130 and 132 are consulted in conjunction with the judges' opinions, as these appear in Figure V, certain marked similarities can be observed. The closest parallel can be drawn, perhaps, between the children's reasons for preference as given in Tables 17 and 18 and the characteristics marked by the judges as present in well-liked poems. Table 15 is, however, also highly indicative in the light of the decision of the judges in regard to characteristics present in least-liked poems.

It will be noted that a clear rhyme scheme, simplicity, dialogue, obvious sound effect, story element, humor, and relation to common experience, all listed with frequency by the children as reasons for preference, are indicated by the judges as markedly present in many of the twenty best liked poems. Therefore it seems reasonable to assume that the children, within the limits of their powers of expression, had a fairly clear perception of why they chose as they did.

This assumption seems further justified by a comparison of reasons given in Table 15 for selecting a poem as least liked with the judges' decision as to characteristics present in the twenty least-liked poems. In Figure V it will be noted that no poem in the top twenty is judged to be relatively difficult while seven poems in the bottom twenty are so characterized. A mood of melancholy is likewise a fairly common characteristic of the twenty bottom poems. When the absence of preferred characteristics is considered, it will be seen that dialogue, obvious sound

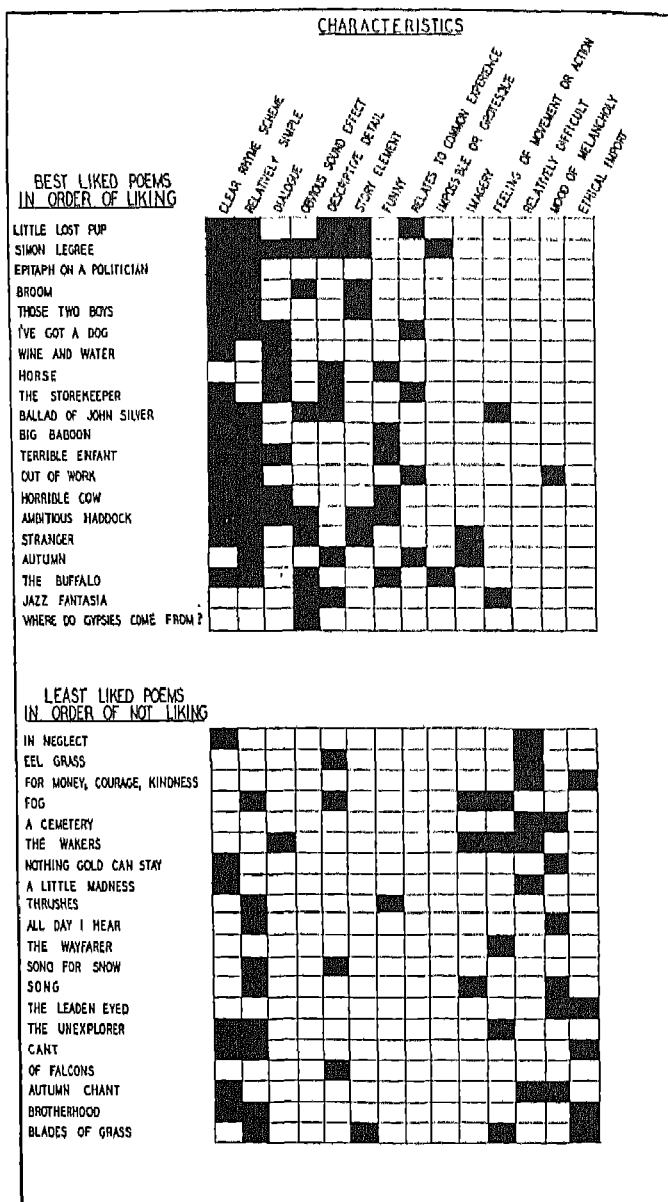


FIGURE V. Characteristics of Best Liked and Least Liked Poems as Judged by Five English Experts.

effect, story element, humor, and relation to common experience are either entirely lacking or illustrated by a single poem under each of these characteristics in the bottom twenty poems.

In two characteristics the expressions of reasons by the children seem in complete contradiction to the analysis of the judges. Ethical import and a feeling of movement or action consistently ranked rather high with the children as reasons for choices. The judges' markings indicate that these qualities were characteristics of the bottom twenty rather than the top twenty. This contradiction is, however, apparent rather than real. The children consistently ranked low all didactic poems unless they had a story interest. They frequently, however, gave a reason for preference that indicated an ethical attitude. Such reasons were often given for choices of poems that were not at all didactic in nature. Apparently a large number of the children looked almost instinctively to poetry for a "lesson" in regard to the conduct of the simple affairs of everyday life. The feeling of movement or action marked as present by the judges in the bottom twenty poems was movement of a much subtler sort than that which commended itself to the children. In two cases it was likewise associated with imagery or difficulty, both negative factors with the children.

Considered as a whole, there is a fairly close agreement between the opinion of the judges in regard to the characteristics present in the forty poems analyzed and the children's reasons for choices, whether for best liked or least liked. This seems highly indicative as the judges made their evaluations simply on the nature of the poems submitted to them without any knowledge of the characteristics that the children had found in them. All judgments were made by the judges without consultation with one another or with the experimenter.

It seems clear that the first eight characteristics that appear in Figure V all have positive values as determinants of choice. Poems that contain a combination of these are markedly well liked. This is indicated not only by the analysis of the judges and the choices of the children, but by the evidence obtained from the reasons given on preference sheets, in themes, and in interviews and discussions.

CHAPTER XIII

Conclusions and Recommendations

SUMMARY OF THE EXPERIMENT

THIS investigation was undertaken with the purpose in mind of discovering in poetry fundamental appeals that would be operative with children at the junior high school level. Its underlying assumption is that it is more significant to discover why children like or fail to like certain poems than it is to discover what poems children like or fail to like. If reasons for preference can be determined, criteria can be evolved that will provide a sound basis for fresh additions to the poetry selected for children. Without such criteria, the present tendency toward the uncritical inclusion of traditional material in courses of study and literature books will continue to be the dominant one in schools. This study is intended as a contribution toward the development of such criteria. It is recognized, however, that it is partial and experimental in nature and cannot be considered as in any sense final or definitive. It does, however, indicate the direction for much needed research.

As the problem was too large to be solved by any single experiment, the initial step taken was to limit the field of investigation by selecting for study certain appeals present in poetry. Six such appeals, four related to subject matter and two to techniques of poetry, were chosen. With the assistance of five qualified judges, 120 poems were selected as experimental material. These were grouped into six units of material of twenty poems each, one for each appeal to be tested. These units were subdivided into groups of ten poems as the plan for the experiment called for the measuring of appreciation within the appeal as well as for comparison of the appeals. For convenience in reference, the six appeals are called categories throughout the study and the subdivisions of appeals, the *a* and *b* subdivisions. In all categories the *a* subdivisions contain poems that are relatively less subtle

or complex than the poems in the *b* subdivision, though all 120 poems used are comparable in difficulty to poetry commonly used at the junior high school level. The purpose of this organization of material was to discover what appeals, or categories, were liked by children and within these appeals, or categories, what kinds of poems were preferred.

The poems were read aloud to ten classes of eighth grade children in a series of experimental periods that extended over almost eight weeks. In each period twelve poems, representative of all six categories and their *a* and *b* subdivisions, were presented. Choices were asked for between paired poems and for best liked, next best liked and least liked, and next least liked. The pair choices provided for judgment on preferences within a category; the first and second choices provided for preferences for categories.

In addition to the poetry study, two subsidiary investigations were undertaken since it was felt that the findings of these might assist in an interpretation of the results obtained on the four categories in poetry that dealt with subject matter appeals. These two investigations consisted of a prose study and a pupil interest questionnaire. The prose study contained brief stories and essays that paralleled as closely as possible the four subject matter categories in poetry. For this synthetic material, composed by the experimenter and her reader, was used. The pupil interest questionnaire, devised by the experimenter, likewise paralleled the four comparable categories in poetry.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Briefly summarized, the findings of the study are as follows:

1. In all three types of material used, the *a* subdivision was consistently preferred except for the category that contrasted the appeal of the commonplace and the romantic. In poetry, the main direction was in favor of the commonplace or *a* subdivision, but there were marked individual exceptions. In the pupil interest questionnaire, the *b* subdivision was preferred.

2. There were marked differences in preferences for the twelve subdivisions in poetry as measured by percentages based on first plus second choices. The three high ranking subdivisions were, in the

order named, Obvious Sound Effect, Commonplace Subject Matter, and Obvious Humor. The three low ranking subdivisions, in the order named, were Straight Didactic, Complex Imagery, and Nature without a Center of Interest.

3. In the prose study, both obvious and subtle humor ranked high for preference and the Straight Didactic and Romantic Subject Matter subdivisions ranked low.

4. In the pupil interest questionnaire, Obvious Humor and Romantic Subject Matter ranked high and Straight Didactic and Subtle Humor ranked low.

5. Sex differences in preference appeared as a significant influence in determining choices in all three types of material used. When analyzed, however, it was clear that these differences were, rather largely, differences in extent rather than in direction.

6. Comparisons between the poetry preferences of children with high grade scores for reading comprehension and children with low grade scores for reading comprehension indicated that the children with high ability tended to favor the *b* subdivision more frequently than did the children with low ability. They tended, likewise, to select poems in the less popular subdivisions. With the children of low ability, the Obvious Sound Effect and Obvious Humor subdivisions were definitely more popular than they were with the children of high ability. However, between these two groups, differences were also chiefly in extent rather than in direction.

7. Relation between choices of poems for best liked and least liked was not, as might be expected, inverse in nature. Obvious Sound Effect, the top ranking subdivision, received a larger percentage of votes for least liked than certain relatively little liked subdivisions. Poems tended to fall into three main groupings: poems for which there was a fairly high degree of consistency in ranking for best liked and least liked; poems that elicited a definite response, either positive or negative, and so ranked high for both best liked and least liked; and poems to which the response was characterized by indifference so that they ranked low for both best liked and least liked.

8. The reasons given by children for preference indicate that a majority of them had fairly well defined if rudimentary critical stand-

ards in poetry. The most frequently given reason for preference was that a poem was funny. The next most frequently given reason was that it was markedly rhythmical.

9. The reasons given by children for selecting a poem as least liked suggest that they were not nearly so clear about the bases of their negative reactions to poetry as they were about their preferences. The most frequently given reason for not liking a poem was that it was not understood. The next most frequently given reason was that it was dull or sad.

10. Discussions held with the ten classes included in the experiment indicated that a fair number of the children were definitely aware of rhythm and responded to it positively. Comments made in the classes showed that a majority of the children could distinguish between rhyme and rhythm and that they were aware, likewise, of alternations in tempo and the effect of these. The comments made on interests in subject matter indicated a majority preference for relatively simple material, presented in story form, spiced with adventure or action, and, if possible, humor as well.

11. After the close of the experiment, an analysis of forty poems, the top twenty and the bottom twenty in rank, was made by five judges selected as competent in the field of poetry. On the basis of their analysis, the characteristics present in the best-liked poems were the following: a clear rhyme scheme, simplicity, dialogue, obvious sound effect, story element, humor, and relation to common experience. On the basis of the same analysis, the twenty least-liked poems not only lacked these qualities but also had the negative factors of difficulty and a mood of melancholy operating against them.

There was a fair extent of agreement between the qualities the judges found in the poems and those suggested by the children as reasons for choices for best liked or least liked.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Insofar as the ten classes of eighth grade children who participated in this experiment can be considered as representative of the junior high school population, certain practices in the selection and presentation of poetry at this age level seem to be implied by the findings

of the study. Some of these have been suggested by earlier investigators, whose findings have been reported in Chapter II. The results of this experiment tend to reinforce such findings at these points.

The chief recommendations that are suggested by a consideration of the evidence in regard to children's interests in poetry that was gathered in the course of this investigation are as follows:

1. If appreciation of poetry, rather than information about poetry, is desired as the outcome of the presentation of poetry, material must be selected that is markedly less difficult than much poetry now used at the junior high school level. All the findings of this investigation that bear upon this point indicate that children tend to prefer poetry that is below what is ordinarily considered to be their grade level. Difficulty is consistently operative against preference.

2. The attitude of teachers in selecting and presenting poetry should be definitely experimental. Only by maintaining such an attitude can teachers be aware of the sincere responses of children to material used in the classroom.

3. The purpose of developing an appreciation of what is granted by cultivated readers to be the highest level of poetry can often best be served by using with children poetry of a distinctly lower level. Teachers should frankly recognize the fact that much of the world's greatest poetry cannot be appreciated even by children of superior ability as they lack the emotional maturity that makes such poetry significant to older readers. This does not imply, however, that insipid and definitely inferior material should be used.

The important thing is, as I. A. Richards suggests, to find what poetry elicits sincere and valid responses. For, as he puts it, "Once the basic level has been reached, a slow climb back may be possible."¹

Helen Haines, in *Living with Books*, suggests a somewhat similar point of view in the following passage, "Through verse, however, many readers enter the heritage of poetry. Youthful minds, especially, respond to the swing of even crude or noisy rhyme and are stirred to imaginative perception by imagery that may be timeworn or commonplace, but that comes to them with the freshness of discovery."²

¹ I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 248. 1929.

² Helen E. Haines, *Living with Books*, p. 379. 1935.

4. Teachers should realize that the comprehension difficulties in poetry differ markedly from comprehension difficulties in other types of reading material. The rigors of poetry are only incidentally related to difficulties in vocabulary. The serious problems in the comprehension of poetry are related to the verse form itself and to the re-orientation in approach essential in comprehending material that is expressed, not directly, but in images. All the findings of this study that bear on this point indicate that an over literal approach on the part of children tends to leave them either puzzled or antagonized by imagery.

5. It seems highly desirable that experts in the field of children's literature and in curriculum construction reconsider the whole problem of the selection and presentation of poetry at the elementary school level. Evidence gathered from the children who participated in this study tends to indicate that poetry should, like music, be treated as an art and presented as such. There was ample reason to believe, on the basis of such evidence, that a fair number of these children had a real appreciation of rhythm of the more obvious sort, a feeling for effective descriptive detail, and some sensitivity to the power of poetry to communicate a mood or emotion directly. This constitutes a fair basis for the development of an esthetic attitude toward poetry.


6. More opportunity should be provided in the schools for the oral interpretation of poetry. The responsiveness of the children who participated in this experiment to obvious sound effects and marked rhythms suggests that a beginning might be made toward true appreciation through such means.

Poems should be grouped for presentation in such a way that they tend to reinforce each other. This grouping should be based frequently on central effects in poems. In this way instruction in techniques of poetry could be avoided, but a sensitivity to the effect of such techniques could be developed in children through pleasurable experiences with them.

7. Studies should be carried on within the schools to determine the effect of maturation on appreciation in literature and the other arts. There seems to be lateral, though not direct, evidence in the

findings of this investigation to indicate that, in the appreciation of poetry, emotional maturity may be of equal, or even greater, significance than intellectual development. One aspect of this is, of course, the fact that the more physiologically mature adolescent has often had a wider experience background than the young, precocious child.

The findings of this study that bear upon this point are those that deal with differences between boys and girls and those that relate to contrasts between the upper and lower groups. Comparisons between the sexes suggest that the girls more nearly approximate developed adult taste than do the boys. This is true even when the girls of the lower group are considered, for these girls are closer to the superior boys in their preferences than they are to the boys of their own group. When the boys alone are considered, it is clear that the boys of the upper group are more mature in their tastes than are the boys of the lower group. This suggests that both intellectual and emotional maturity are involved. A knowledge of how these operate to affect taste would be of the utmost significance to all aspects of teaching that are related to appreciation, and these aspects are numerous in modern education.



APPENDIX

POEMS INCLUDED IN EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL

1. "All Day I Hear." James Joyce. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1930.
2. "All That's Past." Walter de la Mare. Joseph Auslander and Frank Ernest Hill, *The Winged Horse Anthology*. Doubleday, Doran, 1929.
3. "Ambitious Haddock, The." Laura E. Richards. *Tirra Lirra, Rhymes Old and New*. Little, Brown, 1932.
4. "Autumn (To My Mother)." Jean Starr Untermeyer. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1936.
5. "Autumn Chant." Edna St. Vincent Millay. Edwin Markham, *The Book of American Poetry*. Wise, 1936.
6. "Ballad of John Silver, A." John Masefield. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
7. "Big Baboon, The." Hilaire Belloc. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1930.
8. "Blades of Grass, The." Stephen Crane. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1936.
9. "Blessings on Little Boys." Arthur Guiterman. *Death and General Putnam and 101 Other Poems*. Dutton, 1935.
10. "Blessings on the Woods." Arthur Guiterman. *Death and General Putnam and 101 Other Poems*. Dutton, 1935.
- ^b11. "Boots." Rudyard Kipling. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1920.
12. "Brotherhood." Edwin Markham. *The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems*. Doubleday, Doran, 1917.
13. "Buffalo, The." Laura E. Richards. *Tirra Lirra, Rhymes Old and New*. Little, Brown, 1932.
14. "Caliban in the Coal Mines." Louis Untermeyer. Edwin Markham, *The Book of American Poetry*. Wise, 1936.
15. "Cant." W. H. Davies. *The Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*. Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1938.
16. "Cavalier." John Masefield. *Poems by John Masefield*. Macmillan, 1930.

^a Stanzas 1, 2, 5, 6 used.

^b Stanzas 1 through 4 used.

17. "Cemetery, A." Emily Dickinson. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1936.
18. "Centipede Was Happy Quite, A." Anonymous. Mary W. Tileston, *Child's Harvest of Verse*. Little, Brown, 1910.
19. "Chill of Eve." James Stephens. *Collected Poems*. Macmillan, 1928.
20. "Chimpanzee, The." Oliver Herford. Carolyn Wells, *A Nonsense Anthology*. Scribner's, 1902.
21. "City Trees." Edna St. Vincent Millay. *Second April*. Harper and Brothers, 1921.
22. "Cow in Apple Time, The." Robert Frost. *Selected Poems*. Henry Holt, 1928.
23. "Dead Men Tell No Tales." Haniel Long. Robert Haven Schauffler, *The Poetry Cure*. Dodd, Mead, 1925.
24. "Dream Pedlary." Thomas Lowell Beddoes. Helen Fern Daringer and Anne Thaxter Eaton, *The Poets' Craft*. World Book, 1935.
25. "Do You Fear the Wind?" Hamlin Garland. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
26. "Ecl Grass." Edna St. Vincent Millay. *Second April*. Harper, 1921.
27. "Epitaph on a Politician." Hilaire Belloc. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1930.
28. "Eve." Ralph Hodgson. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1930.
29. "Facts." W. H. Davies. *The Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*. Cape and Smith, 1928.
30. "Family Fool, The." Sir W. S. Gilbert. Carolyn Wells, *Vers de Société Anthology*. Scribner's, 1907.
- *31. "Fog" (from "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"). T. S. Eliot. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1936.
32. "Fog Bell, The." Lew Sarrett. *Many, Many Moons*. Henry Holt, 1920.
33. "For Mercy, Courage, Kindness, Mirth." Laurence Binyon. Robert Haven Schauffler, *The Poetry Cure*. Dodd, Mead, 1925.
34. "Forgiveness." W. H. Davies. *The Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*. Cape and Smith, 1929.
35. "Four Little Foxes." Lew Sarrett. Daringer and Eaton, *The Poets' Craft*. World Book, 1935.
36. "Frost Tonight." Edith M. Thomas. Daringer and Eaton, *The Poets' Craft*. World Book, 1935.
37. "Gingham Umbrella, The." Laura E. Richards. *Tirra Lirra, Rhymes Old and New*. Little, Brown, 1932.

* Title "Fog" was substituted for real title, "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and lines 14 through 21 were used.

38. "Glimpse in Autumn." Jean Starr Untermeyer. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
- "39. "Grantchester." Rupert Brooke. *Collected Poems*. Dodd, Mead, 1930.
40. "Green Broom." Unknown. Walter de la Mare, *Come Hither*. Knopf, 1923.
41. "Groundswell, The." John Gould Fletcher. Gerald DeWitt Sanders and John Herbert Nelson, *Chief Modern Poets of England and America*. Macmillan, 1929.
42. "Ilem and Haw." Bliss Carman. Kreymborg Howard, *Lyric America*. McCann, Inc., 1930.
43. "Holly, The." Walter de la Mare. *Poems, 1919-1934*. Holt, 1936.
44. "Horrible Cow, The." Edward Lear. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
45. "Horse." Elizabeth Madox Roberts. *Under the Tree*. Viking, 1930.
46. "Illumination." Arthur Guiterman. *Death and General Putnam and 101 Other Poems*. Dutton, 1935.
47. "I'm Nobody." Emily Dickinson. Robert Haven Schauflyer, *The Poetry Cure*. Dodd, Mead, 1929.
- "48. "In Praise of Apple Trees." Arthur Guiterman. *Death and General Putnam and 101 Other Poems*. Dutton, 1935.
49. "In Neglect." Robert Frost. *Collected Poems of Robert Frost*. Holt, 1930.
- "50. "In Springtime." Willa Cather. *April Twilight*. Knopf, 1924.
- "51. "Islands, The (Puget Sound)." James Rorty. *The Nation* 120:425. April 15, 1925.
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- "54. "John Brown." Vachel Lindsay. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1936.
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* Lines 1 through 12 used.

^b First three stanzas used.

* The word *earth* substituted for *the dead*.

^d The secondary title, *Puget Sound*, was omitted in the title because of the fear of the effect of a local reference.

* Stanzas 1, 4, 5, 6 used.

^f Title "Jumping River Dances" was substituted for real title, "Thunderdrums."

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60. "Little Homes in the Mountains." Arthur Guiterman. *Death and General Putnam and 101 Other Poems*. Dutton, 1935.
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* Lines 1 through 20 and 43 through 67 used.

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- ^a81. "Princess, The." Edith Sitwell. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
82. "Rabbit, The." Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
83. "Running Water." Arthur Guiterman. *Death and General Putnam and 101 Other Poems*. Dutton, 1935.
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87. "Shell, The." James Stephens. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1930.
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91. "Song of Shadows, The." Walter de la Mare. *Collected Poems 1901-1918*. Holt, 1920.
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- ^d94. "Spanish Waters." John Masefield. Daringer and Eaton, *The Poets' Craft*. World Book, 1935.
95. "Spring Goeth All in White." Robert Bridges. Burton E. Stevenson, *The Home Book of Modern Verse*. Holt, 1925.
96. "Storekeeper, The." George Abbe. Anne Winslow, *Trial Balances*. Macmillan, 1935.
97. "Stranger." Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poets*. Harcourt, Brace, 1936.
98. "Summer Evening." Walter de la Mare. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1930.

^a This title substituted for correct title, *Variations on an Old Nursery Rhyme*.

^b Slang was substituted for profanity in this poem.

^c The author or source of this poem could not be located.

^d Stanzas 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 used.

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100. "Tarry Buccaneer, The." John Masefield. *Poems of John Masefield*. Macmillan, 1930.
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102. "Terrible Infant, A." Frederick Locker-Lampson. Burton E. Stevenson, *The Home Book of Verse*. Henry Holt, 1918.
103. "Those Two Boys." Franklin P. Adams. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1936.
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109. "Velvet Shoes." Elinor Wylie. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
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- ^b113. "West Wind, The." John Masefield. Louis Untermeyer, *This Singing World*. Harcourt, Brace, 1926.
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120. "Yak, The." Hilaire Belloc. Louis Untermeyer, *Modern British Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace, 1930.

^a Line referring to fleas altered to avoid possible humorous effect.

^b Stanzas 1 through 4 used. ^c Stanzas 1 and 2 used.

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